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The Film Crisis—DAYS OF RECKONING

Also: RICHARD WINNINGTON
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TYRONE GUTHRIE
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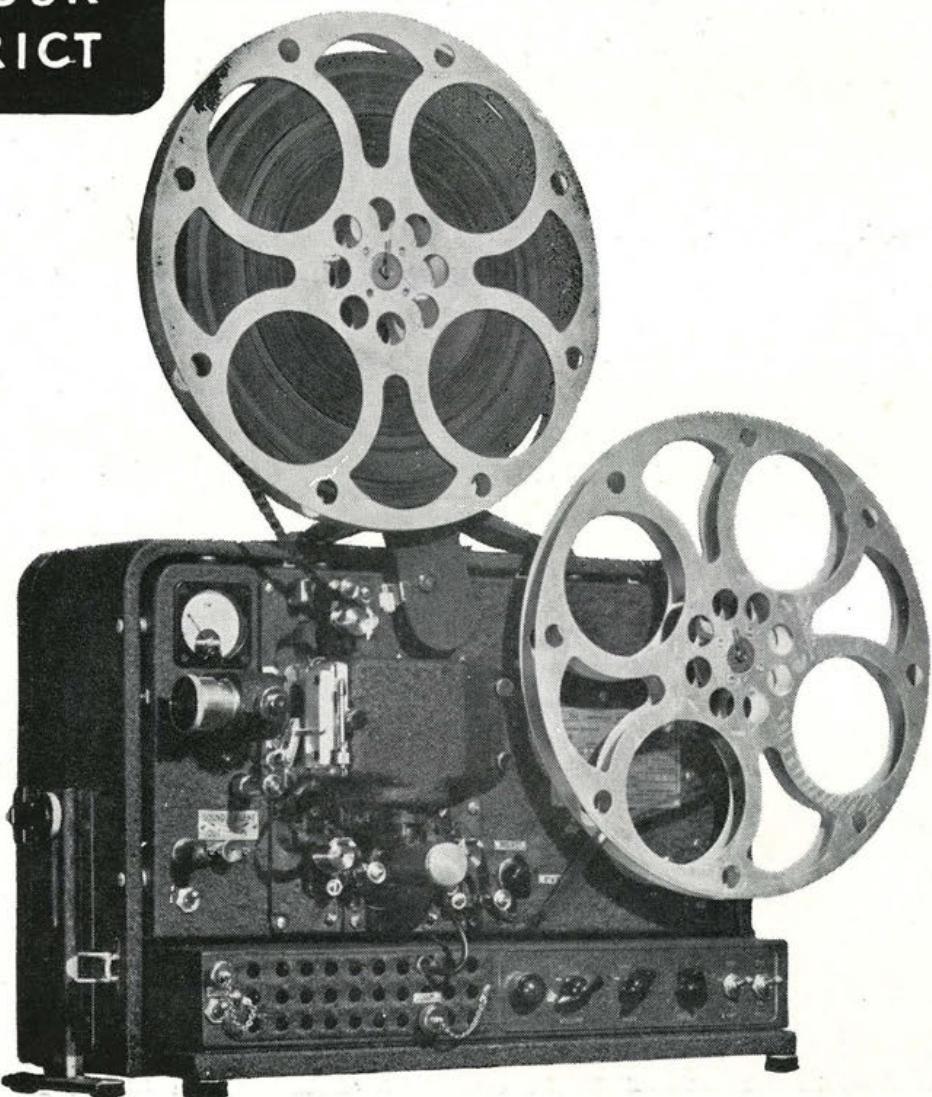
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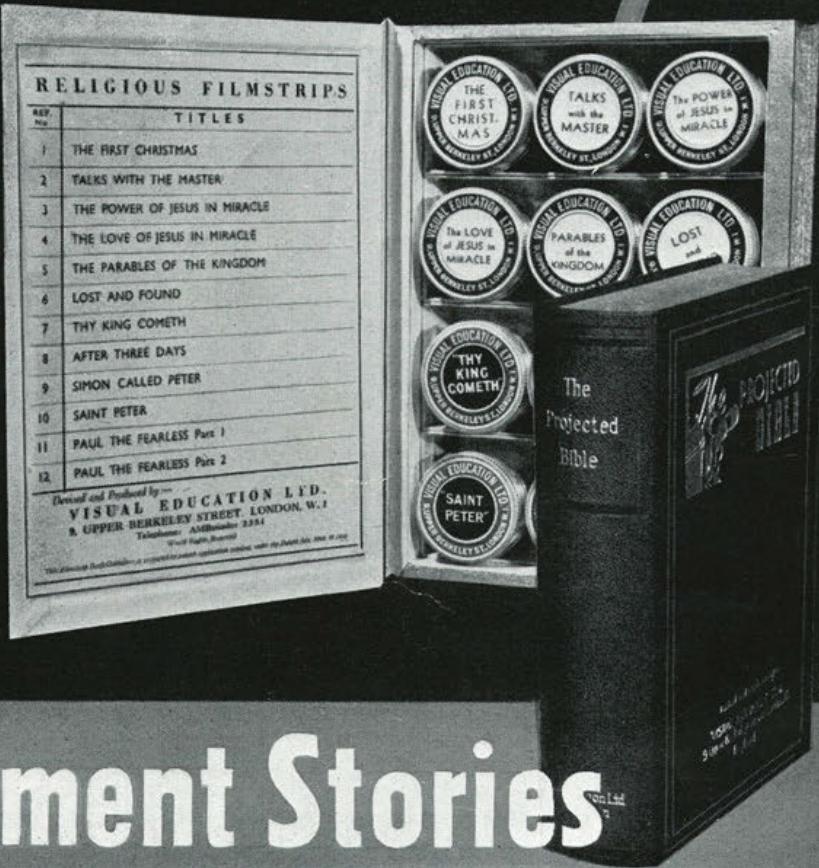
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The Front Page

THE NEW YEAR brings with it an unseasonable quiet in many British studios. At the moment of writing, nothing is definitely planned to occupy any of the stages at Denham; David Lean's *Madeleine* has at last reached its epic and costly conclusion at Pinewood; Shepperton (of which half is now leased to 20th Century-Fox) is practically idle; Shepherd's Bush, the last effects auctioned off, is being prepared for television by the B.B.C. Repeated warnings are apt to dull one's sense of catastrophe, but the crisis—put off, as crises usually are, in various ways for many months—has now indisputably arrived.

How long it will stay with us, it is too early to say. As yet, there is no definite agreement on diagnosis, let alone remedies. For the former, we make a beginning here with Duncan Crow's summary of the Gater and Plant Reports, and for the latter with Nicholas Davenport's comment and suggested lines of action.

To ask, when business is as bad as it is, where the artist comes in, may appear to some the height of perversity. But to those who believe that the cinema has a more than commercial function, Tyrone Guthrie's strictures on the romance between art and box-office may also seem timely. He considers that here is the proper field for divorcement; before anything is excused (or sacrificed again) on the grounds of Prestige, we should be sure what this somewhat elusive quality is really worth—not in pounds, shillings and pence, but, as the Gater Report also remarks, "*in quality and entertainment value*" as compared with the best of imported films.

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LONDON FILMS for *Seven Days to Noon*, *Gone to Earth*.

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BRITISH FILM ACADEMY for *Rubens*, *Dramma di Christo*.

CENTRAL OFFICE OF INFORMATION for *Come Saturday*.

ASSOCIATED BRITISH-PATHÉ for *Queen of Spades*.

EALING STUDIOS for *Kind Hearts and Coronets*.

20th CENTURY-FOX for *Pinky*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Snake Pit*.

M.G.M. for *Force of Evil*.

UNITED ARTISTS for *Home of the Brave*.

FILM CLASSICS and WARNER'S PUBLICITY for *Lost Boundaries*.

UNIVERSAL-INTERNATIONAL and EROS FILMS for *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, *Criss Cross*.

COLUMBIA PICTURES for *The Reckless Moment*.

U.P.A. for *Flat Hatting*, *The Magic Fluke*, *T. V. Spot*.

FRONTIER FILMS for *Native Land*. FILM DOCUMENTS for *The Quiet One*.

UNIVERSALIA and SEQUENCE for *Isole della Laguna*.

INTERNATIONAL FILM BUREAU for the portrait of de Sica.

ALCINA for *Miquette et sa Mère*.

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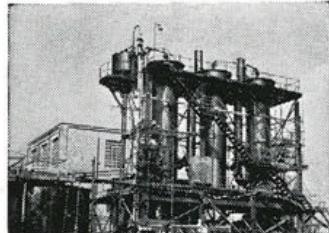
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Olivia de Havilland.

IT IS PLEASANTER to give, as to receive, a pat on the back than a rap over the knuckles. Considering a year of cinema in 1949, the editor looks first to his Oscars; this is a long, alternately enjoyable and perplexing task. One begins by thinking of particularly admirable films and performances—easy enough, for the half-dozen-or-so titles have been on hand for this moment, the few films that have come as an exciting shock or a pleasant confirmation of hopes. The difficulties begin when one has to start weighing one film, one performance, against the other, calculating values in what may seem an ungracious or miserly manner. In the end, it is best to give this up as an impossible task, and allow the deciding vote to personal enjoyment. So, when a reader asks, "How can he think X better than Y?" the answer is most likely to be that he has not decided objectively, but feels he enjoyed one more than the other.

POINTS OF VIEW

A Retrospect of 1949



John Garfield.

Such an admission might be taken as a negation of objective criticism: but it implies, rather, that no criticism is totally objective. Pleasure can be analysed up to a considerable point—it is only impossible to place rationally the pleasure communicated by one experience above another.

Here, then, are some editorial Oscars for 1949. The selection is made from films publicly shown in this country; the continental season has, unfortunately, been thin on the whole, and the main contenders are British and American.

Of performances this year, there are many which it would be difficult to judge comparatively, but Olivia de Havilland's unforgettable characterisation in *The Snake Pit* would surely be the most outstanding piece of film acting in any year. After her, I suggest Edith Evans for



Left: Alec Guinness.

Right: Edith Evans.



her fantastic, macabre creation in *Queen of Spades* (with special commendation for subtlety and variation of facial expression through slabs of rubber make-up). Amongst actors, the palm goes to John Garfield—an actor who has developed greatly in the last few years—for two remarkable performances, in *Force of Evil* (particularly) and *We Were Strangers*: and to Alec Guinness, another welcome recruit from the British stage, for his eight brilliant sketches in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. One only wishes he had played the murderer as well as the victims, and made it nine.

The runners-up are numerous, most of them coming from a handful of films notable for a generally high standard of playing. Robert Ryan comes close to Garfield for his work in *The Set-Up* and *Act of Violence*: also Van Heflin in the latter film. Amongst newer screen actors, Montgomery Clift in *The Search*, James Donald in *Trotter True*, Farley Granger in *They Live By Night*, Kirk Douglas in *Champion*, and James Edwards as the negro in *Home of the Brave* made strong impressions. In "character" parts, one remembers Louis Salou's portrait of a decayed aristocrat in *Les Amants de Vérone*, Walter Huston in *Treasure of Sierra Madre*, Thomas Gomez in *Force of Evil*, Maurice Schutz as the oldest Goupi of them all in *Goupi Mains Rouges*, and almost the entire European cast of *The Third Man*. Other actresses who have given exceptional performances are Anna Magnani in *Angelina*, Madeleine Robinson in *Une si Jolie Petite Plage*, Joan Greenwood in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, Lea Padovani in *Give Us This Day*, Beatrice Pearson in *Force of Evil*; Florence Eldridge in *Act of Murder*, Aline MacMahon in *The Search*, Marianne Oswald (surely the year's most vicious characterisation) as the housekeeper in *Les Amants de Vérone*, Ethel Waters as



Vittorio de Sica, director of "Bicycle Thieves."



Beatrice Pearson and Thomas Gomez in "Force of Evil."

the negro grandmother in *Pinky* and Mary Astor in *Act of Violence*.

For the most outstanding film of the year, nearly everybody's choice will no doubt lie between de Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*, the crowning example of the Italian renaissance, and Flaherty's beautiful *Louisiana Story*: they tie for first place. As runners-up, there are various candidates—*The Third Man* and *Queen of Spades* from Britain; *Goupi Mains Rouges* from France (the showing of *Jour de Fête* at the Edinburgh festival is not enough to qualify it): from America, *The Search*, *They Live by Night*, *The Set-Up*, *Force of Evil*—and I choose the latter because, though a minor film, it is an unusually complete, original and adventurous one.

All in all, not a bad year, though more remarkable for about fifteen good films and some distinguished failures than for many masterpieces. In Britain, France and Italy, financial crises and generally unstable conditions have been strongly felt—not least because they have obliged a number of important directors to shelve projects and either to accept what was offered to them or remain inactive. America, less affected, though feeling a slight draught, has sent the highest number of good films. Finally, 1949 was a salutary year for an over-ingenuous world because its two best films, *Bicycle Thieves* and *Louisiana Story*, were both made outside a studio with non-professional actors, and remind us what poetry and intimacy of human feeling can be conveyed with the most modest resources.

DAYS OF RECKONING

HOME TRUTHS

Duncan Crow

It is not easy in a darkened cinema to remember that you are watching the product of an industry. The stars and the story command your attention or arouse your displeasure. For those whose job it is to apply their critical powers professionally to the post-screen dissection of a film it is, more often than not, the acting and the treatment once again that start the critical process. But neither public nor critics will be heard to say "this film isn't earning enough", or to complain, "that film cost too much", as they might complain about the price of soap. To the audience the finance of a film is the price of the cinema seat.

But recently cinema-goers have become aware of another class of critics—those who have been delving into the millions of the movie-makers and their salesmen and showmen. The cinema-goer, the patron of the film industry, who had always judged that industry by what he saw on the screen, began to wonder, after Mr. Rank's jeremiad, a threat to full screens in the future, how production companies could afford the luxury that shone out upon him from that screen. He began to look beyond the price of his cinema seat, and to see that the shillings of his patronage had a long round to make if they were to satisfy all the demands that were made upon them by the Exhibitors, who screened the films, by the Distributors who hired them out to the Exhibitors, by the Production Companies who traded them to the Distributors—and by the Entertainment Tax.

The financial critics, in the shape of two committees appointed by the Board of Trade confirmed these doubts in their reports published at the beginning of December. The committees were under the respective chairmanships of Sir George Gater and Professor Sir Arnold Plant. The former's Working Party had as the starting-point of its investigations, "Film Production Costs": the latter's Committee of Enquiry was centred on "Distribution and Exhibition of Cinematograph Films". The two questions are, of course, inter-related, and the ultimate aim of the recommendations in both Reports is to bring about a revival of prosperity in the film industry as a whole. The Gater report is concerned with setting the Producer's own house in order, the Plant report with readjusting the relationships between Exhibitor, Distributor and Producer—to find how they may "best stimulate and satisfy the public demand and yield the maximum net return at the box-office". The most far-reaching recommendations are, in fact, in the field of Exhibition, since they are aimed also to "secure for the producer of each film the full return to which he is entitled by virtue of the public's assessment of its worth". The bleak truth is that "unless producers recover from the home market . . . a large part of the cost of making what may be called the general run of films, which cannot earn much revenue overseas, film production as an organised, permanent industry, including the making of highly successful films, cannot be maintained", and, under the present organisation of the industry, the average cost of production cannot be recovered from the cinemas in Great Britain, and overseas returns are negligible for the vast majority of films.

Of the gross box-office receipts in 1948, some 40%, or £43.6 million, was earned by British films at home. Out of this figure 36% was removed by Entertainment Tax, 39%

by the Exhibitors, nearly 6% by the Distributors, and just over 2% was accounted for by the supporting programme, leaving 17% for the Producers of British first feature films. The Plant Committee on Distribution and Exhibition believed that of the four groups, all demanding a share of the shillings, the Exchequer's demand was "in general quite excessive" and that the film industry could not support the present burden of the Entertainments Tax.

The size of the problem can be gauged from the fact that after deduction of Tax from the average price paid for a cinema seat (1s. 6½d.) there was barely 1s. left to pay for the whole cost of the programme, including the running of the cinema and remunerations of Producers and Exhibitors. On this basis the Producers received an average of 1½d. each time someone paid for admission to the cinema, and even this figure is probably too high, because it includes both British and American films, and the average earnings of the latter tend to be higher. To give the average cost of a British picture, which has to be paid for by the 1½ds., would not be realistic, but £200,000 is by no means an extraordinary figure.

Even without the detailed figures for any named film the Reports reiterated the truth of Mr. Micawber's dictum about income and expenditure. The method of striking the happy balance between the two was not agreed unanimously. Not unnaturally the Producers felt that it was the income that must be increased. Not enough of the shillings came back to the Production companies, and, while they agreed that a reduction of expenditure would help, if it were not carried to the stage where it would affect the quality of the films, they were sure that more of the price of patronage must be returned to the film-makers before the industry could get out of its present parlous state. The Employee representatives conceded "the unfair distribution of box-office receipts", but thought that it was lack of proper organisation and efficient operation throughout the whole film industry that was causing financial difficulties in production. The fault was not only in income.

One way of easing the industry's financial strain would be to increase the total box-office takings of the cinemas. The Plant Committee reported that the present system of Exhibition was unnecessarily limiting the shillings of patronage, and suggested a method for augmenting them. In order to understand the Committee's recommendations it is necessary to sketch the present system of Exhibition.

There were, in 1948, about 4,800 commercial cinemas operating in this country. In all they had a seating capacity of 4,200,000 and each seat was taken, on an average, seven times a week. These cinemas vary in size and can be classified in three groups: less than 500 seats, 501-1,500 seats, and more than 1,500 seats. Of the total number of cinemas 25% come into group one, with 10% of the seating capacity, over 60% come into group two, with about 60% of the seats, and between 10% and 15% come into the third group, with 30% of the seats. In other words a film can be shown to 90% of the potential audience by being screened in only 75% of the cinemas. To this must be added the fact that the average price of admission is usually higher in the larger cinemas.

For fairly obvious reasons the Producer and the Distributor of a film are anxious to get their share of the

money from its exhibition as soon as possible. A quick return means a smaller amount of interest to be paid on borrowed capital, and the opportunity to keep up a constant flow of production unhampered by financial breaks. Added to this, public interest in a film is stimulated by the publicity campaign which the Distributor carries out, and if the film cannot be shown as widely as possible when public interest in it is at its peak, then obviously the box-office takings will not be as great as they might have been.

Theoretically speaking, the way to get the largest and quickest returns on a film would be to screen it first in the largest cinemas throughout the country. This could not, of course, be done simultaneously—because the number of copies available would be limited by reasons of economy, even if the present Government restriction on numbers, to save dollar-imported film base, were not in force. The number of prints available to-day range from about 35 for an ordinary first feature to 75 for an exceptional film.

In practice, however, the system of distribution differs from theory for two main reasons. The first is the "barring" practice, and the second is the grouping of many cinemas in large circuits. The "barring" practice simply means that the Exhibitor hiring a film receives a guarantee that the same film will not be shown concurrently or immediately afterwards, in any other cinema within a certain "competitive area". If it were, of course, his chance of filling his own cinema to capacity would be reduced, and for that reason a certain amount of "barring" is necessarily inevitable.

There are three main cinema circuits, two controlled by the Rank Organisation—the Odeon and Gaumont-British circuits—and the third, the A.B.C. circuit, owned by the Associated British Picture Corporation. These three circuits, although only owning 947 cinemas, have one-third of the seating capacity of the whole 4,800. Their ownership is, in fact, mainly concentrated in the larger cinemas (they have 70% of all the cinemas in Group 3), where the potential takings are highest, and for this reason a booking with one of them is essential if a British Producer is to have any hope of recovering his costs of production.

There are disadvantages as well as benefits attached to a circuit booking. The circuits control 507 cinemas in Groups 1 and 2, and this means that a film may be shown for the first time in a small cinema, when there is a much larger cinema next-door which cannot have the film because it is not in the circuit. Furthermore, each of the three main circuits is associated with a production company and is "under great pressure, if not direction" to take the films of that company, whatever their quality, in preference to films made by an independent Producer which may be better in quality and more to the public liking.

The Plant Committee considered that there was a need to introduce more competitive trading into the system of distribution and exhibition, but without either disbanding the circuits or suggesting State control of any cinemas. It suggested that more prints should be made available, that the "barring" practice be relaxed, and that the cinemas with the greatest box-office potential in any competitive area, whatever their ownership, should be allowed to bid for the first showing of any new film that came to the area. It also recommended that the practice of showing the week-day programmes on Sunday, instead of old films which can be obtained cheaply, should be increased. At

present 90% of Sunday programmes do not include the main week-day film.

That there are difficulties in the way of operating this plan for increasing competition against the general background of the film industry to-day, the Committee itself was aware. The Committee did not believe that the plan would increase box-office takings sufficiently to allow Exhibitors to pay substantially more for the hire of films, but it made a further recommendation which it hoped would help Producers. The usual terms of hiring a film to an Exhibitor are to receive from him a percentage of the box-office takings after the deduction of Entertainments Tax. The current practice is for the Exhibitors to pay no more than 50%, however great the attraction of the film. This tends to subsidise the bad films by penalising the good ones, and the Committee recommend that this ceiling percentage should be removed and a sliding scale of film hire substituted, so that the Distributor, and ultimately the Producer, should receive their share of the true value of the film.

Even if these recommendations should prove effective in returning more of the shillings of patronage to the Producers, the Gater Report on Film Production Costs showed that much remains to be done before the Producers make an economic use of their income. The paramount necessity is to speed up the rate of production, and its importance can be readily understood by the relationship between production time and labour costs. In 43 films which were analysed, the average amount spent on labour was half the total cost incurred, 32% for film studio people and 18% for the actors and musicians.

Leaving aside the question of quality, there is a valuable standard of measurement for the "productivity" of film-making: the average screen time per camera day—that is, the amount of film ultimately shown on the screen which is shot in one day. The Gater Committee analysed the "productivity rate" of 43 first feature films made between 1946 and 1948. The films were divided into five categories according to their total costs, ranging from Class A (under £100,000) to Class E (over £350,000), and were then further divided into two periods of time—one half completed before 30th September, 1947, and the other half completed after that date. The highest average screen time per camera day in both periods was reached by the Class A films, the lowest by the Class E films. The average rate for all films in the first period was 1.04 minutes, while the corresponding figure for the second period was 1.29 minutes. The average length of the films in the first period was 99 minutes running time, and 103 minutes in the second, and, although the more expensive films tend to be longer, these lengths are reasonably constant. Under these circumstances, it can be appreciated that the most vital factor in securing reduction in the costs of production is to increase the average screen time per camera day. There are no comparable figures available for Hollywood productions, but four first feature films made there recently reached a rate of 2.6 minutes per day. The Gater Committee recommended that all British studios should try to step up their rate to 2 minutes a day, in order to keep down production costs.

The Report labels present methods of production planning as "the most serious deficiency in the industry", and calls attention to the money wasted when shooting starts before the script has been completed, or when lack



Gone to Earth

David Farrar as Jack Reddin and Jennifer Jones as Hazel Woodus in the Powell-Pressburger film of Mary Webb's "Gone to Earth," recently completed. Other players include Cyril Cusack and Esmond Knight. The film is in colour.

of consultation between the production departments and the director causes unnecessarily elaborate sets to be built. It also calls for long-term planning between the various Production companies so that violent fluctuations in output can be avoided, and "idle time" between productions, which increases overheads, can be reduced to the minimum.

There are other reasons for high costs of production: studio rents have gone up, the cost of managerial services has risen by 200% since 1939, materials such as timber have increased in price by 300%, wages have gone up, the five-day week was introduced into the industry in 1947, some producers and directors waste money and cause overtime difficulties by unnecessary perfectionism.

But basic to the problem of reducing production costs, and the wider problems of the film industry, is an issue of supreme importance to the whole of British industry, from which the glamour of the screen is no protection. It is the issue of management-worker relationships, of human relations in industry. One of the most important recommendations of all, in the Gater Report, reads: "*That both sides of the industry should seek urgently to establish mutual confidence, and that to this end steps should be taken where necessary to ensure the effective working of Joint Production Advisory Committees and Joint Works Committees, thereby reducing the number of disputes and facilitating the settlement at studio level, of such disputes as arise*". Without mutual confidence in the British film industry the price of patronage can never be high enough for prosperity.

they are really pessimistic. They give themselves away in their argument that unless producers can recover in the home market the bulk of the cost of making "the general run of films" which cannot earn much revenue overseas, "film production as an organised, permanent industry . . . cannot be maintained". For they do not believe that "the general run of films" can stand up to the competition—in spite of quota protection—of American films whose costs of production have already been largely covered in the United States.

This extreme pessimism should, I think, be rejected. Sir George Gater's working party were, I believe, too depressed by the waste, extravagance and incompetence they found on the studio floors. They did not allow sufficiently for the revolution in studio technique which can be accomplished by brains and imagination. Did they ever go to a television studio and study the television producer's methods? Deploring the slow rate of shooting in British film studios they urged that a minimum of two minutes of screen time per day should be the immediate objective. But surely that is much too modest. If producers cannot invent a way of making five minutes of screen time, at least, per studio day—Alfred Hitchcock has done, on occasion, ten minutes—they should go out of business. We have reached the point where nothing short of a revolution in studio technique will save the film production industry. That is why it is wrong for the Government to bolster up out-of-date, uneconomic production by the thinly veiled subsidies of National Film Finance Corporation loans. Such loans will complete the ruin of the whole industry, for they keep alive the incompetent producer who drives the public out of the cinemas.

The second—and slightly more optimistic—school of thought about the future of British films was supported to some extent by the report of Professor Arnold Plant's Committee on distribution and exhibition. The cinemas could provide, they agree, a better exploitation of British films and the producers' share of the box-office total could be slightly increased. Mr. Harold Wilson would no doubt have accepted their recommendations *en bloc* if they had not made the *faux pas* of backing Mr. Rank's demand for a reduction in Entertainment Tax. But I am glad that he held his hand, for their report was as timid as Sir George Gater's. When they provide strong factual support for the divorce of studio control from theatre control—and for that matter of studio control from distribution control—it is absurd for them to run away from divorce because of the adverse short-run effect it might have on the volume of production. What every one must realise by now is that it is not volume that can save the film production industry from total collapse, but quality. It is only good pictures that can bring the crowds back into the cinemas and restore the prestige of British film craft. It is not good socialism or common sense to bring financial aid to the incompetent.

It is announced that Sir Michael Balcon has now been appointed honorary adviser to the National Film Finance Corporation. I have always urged that this board of City financiers should receive expert advice. (But not from one man: why not from a Committee of experts?) When the five million pounds they had to lend have been exhausted, which must be very soon, perhaps the film production industry will begin to revive on sound lines—through the survival of the fittest.

COMMON SENSE ON THE FILM CRISIS

Nicholas Davenport

ON THE MOOT QUESTION whether film production will ever pay its way in Great Britain there are two schools of thought. The first is frankly pessimistic and negative. It cries "Never". It argues that a business which employs artists, which tries to create a new prototype every time it "tools up" in its factory, is not a commercial proposition. Patroness of this school is Lady Yule, who has lately declared in the Press that film people are over-paid, lazy, incompetent, extravagant—and incorrigible. As she is reputed to have lost money in financing British films she is entitled to be heard. The second school of thought is rather more hopeful. It cries "Yes"—provided the producers are given a larger and fairer share of the box-office. Loyal disciples of this school are, of course, the out-of-work producers and directors, but it is to be noted that the workers they employ add a corollary—that it is idle to give the producer a larger share of the box-office unless his production is better planned, more efficient and less wasteful.

Sir George Gater's working party on film production costs reported that it had no mandate to pronounce judgment on these two schools of opinion. It was only charged with the duty of examining ways and means of reducing costs and it came to the unanimous conclusion that costs *could* be reduced by "a concerted effort throughout the industry to secure economy". But if you care to read between the lines of their report you will find that

FILM IN THE MAKING

Seven Days to Noon

THE BOULTING BROTHERS have probably been both over- and under-estimated by critics. It is, of course, quite a difficult problem to distinguish between the half-failure and the half-success, and this problem their films usually present. Ten years ago, *Pastor Hall* and then *Thunder Rock* showed a promising new talent; during the war, John Boultong directed a long-short semi-documentary about the R.A.F., *Journey Together*, one of the best of its kind; *Desert Victory* and *Burma Victory*, both highly effective compilations, displayed Roy Boultong's notable skill as an editor. After the war the brothers established an independent unit, Charter Films, which consists—apart from themselves—of an associate producer, a production manager, a lighting cameraman (Gilbert Taylor) and a publicist. The brothers take it in turns to direct and produce: Roy directed *Fame is the Spur* and *The Guinea-Pig*, John made *Brighton Rock* and has just completed *Seven Days to Noon*.

The post-war record is somewhat ambiguous. The decision to film a facile commercial "problem" play, *The Guinea Pig*, cannot be applauded: *Fame is the Spur* had a good idea that somehow misfired almost completely in the handling: Graham Greene and the brothers between them compromised *Brighton Rock*.



The "Seven Days to Noon" unit on location in Trafalgar Square Underground station (after closing time). Above: two of the players, Hugh Cross and Sheila Manahan, rehearse for a shot. Below: the unit lining up the shot.





"Seven Days to Noon." Barry Jones.

Because they aimed fairly high, the shortcomings of these films were rather heavily emphasised by the critics. The Boultings are touchy about what they feel to be unsympathetic criticism (their favourite critic is Campbell Dixon). Critics are too apt to regard, they consider, high intentions as a kind of aggressive challenge to themselves; it is true, nevertheless, that high intentions present an equal challenge to the film-makers.

Seven Days to Noon is basically melodrama. The action is

set a few years in the future: the British prime minister receives a letter from a contemporary notability threatening to blow up the Houses of Parliament within seven days unless an important political decision is taken. Scotland Yard discovers that the writer of the letter has disappeared, and the rest is a London man-hunt (finally involving the whole population) to track him down before the ultimatum expires. The original story is by Paul Dehn, the screenplay by Frank Harvey Jnr. and Roy Boulting.



A sketch by John Elphick, the art director, for a "Seven Days to Noon" interior, and (right) the completed set.

The unit spent several weeks on location in London: they filmed in many streets, on Westminster Bridge (where traffic was controlled by a walkie-talkie radio), in Trafalgar Square Underground Station. The studio interiors have been executed with a careful naturalism at once appropriate and economical. The designs of the art director, John Elphick, are inspired by the income-groups of the characters involved and not by "production values". Gilbert Taylor feels his task to be something equivalent to the cameraman's of *The Naked City*, and his lighting is keyed to the demands of actuality.

There are no stars: the leads are two stage-players, Barry Jones, as the scientist on the run, and Olive Sloane as a London woman obliged for a time to give him shelter. Against the fashion, the picture is not wholly pre-planned. A great deal of location material was shot, which will be shaped mainly in the editing, and the shooting script allows for flexibility in the final choice of studio set-ups.

Prophecies are rash, but I think *Seven Days to Noon* should be considerably better than the last three Boulting pictures. The Boultings are younger (36) than most leading British film directors, and their style and range is by no means as defined as that, say, of Reed or Thorold Dickinson. Perhaps directors, like novelists, usually mature late. Independence is a rare natural quality in the cinema to-day; there is no doubt that the Boultings are endowed with it—they refuse to tie themselves to any large production-house, they are earnestly outspoken on any matters



John Boulting rehearses Barry Jones.

connected with the film industry and unafraid of causing offence, they ask anxiously: "How much art can come out of an industry like this?"

From film-makers, this is indeed a leading question. Without new standards to set against the old, "independence" by itself can go woolly at the edges: the Boultings' twin, mutually reinforced outlook on life has won them their own bloodless revolution; but as for the reconstruction that should follow, their work has shown no real development over the last few years. For that, we (and, I hope, they) are now ready.

FRANK ENLEY.



Depression on Westminster Bridge: Olive Sloane in "Seven Days to Noon."

INTERVIEW WITH DREYER

John H. Winge



CARL DREYER has a great reputation for shyness but he received me quite cheerfully in his Copenhagen flat and offered me coffee and an excellent cake—both of which are rarities in this city which still suffers from the wounds of the Nazi occupation. I asked him in which language he would prefer to converse—English or German. He waved his hand in disgust: "No German for me any more", he said. "Let's speak English".

Danish film friends had told me that he had been in Israel to find locations for his great film on the life of Christ—an old pet project of his. So I asked him about it.

"To get things straight", he answered, "I cannot give any information on my Christ film. I'll leave tomorrow for the United States to have talks with a financing group over there and they have written me that I must not talk to anybody about anything related to the project. However, I hope this time it will work out all right and I'll be able to make the picture in Israel and in Hollywood".

I reminded him of his brief stay in New York about a year and a half ago. At that time the *New York Times* magazine had published an interview with him on occasion of his arrival from Denmark and he talked rather freely on his Christ film project and his intention to go to Hollywood

to see his old friend, the writer Leon Feuchtwanger, who is one of the greatest authorities on the history of the times of Christ. But Dreyer never arrived in Hollywood. Mr. Feuchtwanger received many letters addressed to Mr. Dreyer but no word from Dreyer himself. It turned out that Dreyer had returned to Denmark after three weeks in New York because lack of funds had prevented the trip to the West Coast.

"So your American trip was in vain", I asked. "Yes and no", he replied, "Mrs. Dunlop, of the rubber tyre people, wrote me after the publication of the interview and offered me one million dollars for my project. I've turned the letter over to my New York agent but I'm afraid he has messed it up".

The book *A film director's work* by Ebbe Neergaard—not yet published in English—says about the Christ project: "Only Jewish actors will be used, apart from a few Italians who will act the parts of Romans. The film will suggest that the Romans, not the Jews, were responsible for Jesus' death. Palestine was an occupied country. Sadducees are described as resistance people, fighting for liberty. The Pharisees are the bourgeois who kept themselves neutral though devoted to God's service. Zelots were collaborators—an upper-class which served the Roman occupation forces.

"Dreyer intends to describe Jesus as politically inactive. His reign is not of this world. But by public pressure he was forced to become Messiah, the national liberator. Therefore he rode into Jerusalem on an ass as a sign that the prophecy had been fulfilled.

"The film does not start with the birth of Jesus but with Christ as a grown man, talking in the midst of the crowd. In this, as in other films of Dreyer's, time will be concentrated to some extent. Jesus will use only the words that are in the gospels, no others. The plot will keep itself strictly to the gospel, too.

"The style Dreyer has chosen for the film is not supposed to be either naturalistic or documentary, but more like the formal simplifications of a modern wood-cut".

Talking carefully around the subject of the Christ project Dreyer also spoke on the problem of film style. He emphasized that he always tries to establish the pictorial style of a film before he begins to work on it. "So the style of *The Passion of Joan of Arc* was set by me before I had even started on the script. But this style was good for just this one picture. Another picture of mine, like *Day of Wrath*, was made in a quite different style, again not to be repeated. Each picture carries its own style in itself and I have to find it anew each time. In the case of *Vampyr* I had a hard time to explain to my German cameraman (Rudolph Maté) what I had in mind. He could not follow me and I didn't know how else I could make myself understood. So we ran experimental shots for days and

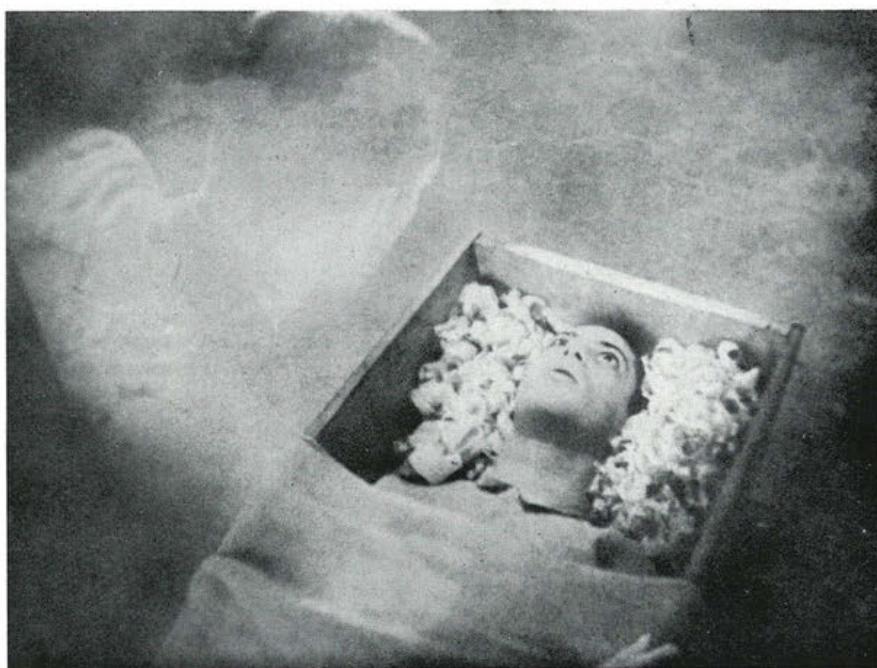
days without success. One day, however, some sun reflection had been caught by the lens and the cameraman apologised for this unfortunate error. But this was exactly what I had wanted—here was the style of my film. Now all I had to do was to convince the cameraman of the lucky instance of his 'error' and to keep for good what he had intended to throw away".

Judging by his *Joan* and *Day of Wrath*—and secretly also by his Christ project—I asked Dreyer if he bears any kind of grudge against the Catholic Church or if he wants to show it in a critical light, at least. He seemed to be rather bewildered by the question. "I don't want to criticise the Catholic Church" he said after a while, "I want to criticise the whole social structure of its time, of which the Church is just a part. This goes for *Joan* as well as for *Day of Wrath*. It is the cruelty and stupidity of the whole society which I want to show".

Like most European directors Dreyer too likes to write his own script and to cut his own film. His strong feeling for pictorial composition is world famous and so is his very peculiar handling of his actors. I told him that I had heard that Mme. Falconetti—the unforgettable *Joan*—had said that Dreyer had forced her with all kinds of shock into a sort of terror during which she was photographed. She often did not even know what scene was being shot.

Dreyer protested this version with vigour. "This is not true at all," he said. "She was told quite exactly what it was all about and we ran our rushes every night together and discussed them and re-shot them whenever necessary. I didn't terrorise her or anyone else, either. In my work with actors I feel like a midwife helping to give birth to the actor's art: I help him, advise him and explain to him but the performance he will have to give all out of his own artistic strength. He has to create. I can only stand by".

Despite his great fame Dreyer has not been a busy director. The high artistic quality of his pictures has scared away the commercial producers. For years, after *Joan*, he had to make a living by writing reports on court proceedings for a Copenhagen daily, and to obtain the chance to make *Day of Wrath* was a major operation performed by a group of influential and stubborn friends. After that silence again descended on Dreyer. But at least the Danish Government invited him to direct several of the documentaries which are made every year for Danish Kulturfilm, the Government's own remarkable production originated by Mogens Skot-Hansen and ably continued by Ib Koch-Olsen. These documentaries are not Dreyer's field; they are well made and in fine taste, but the narrowness of plot and assignment cannot satisfy an artist of Dreyer's wide impact. So far they have paid for his bread and perhaps also some of the butter, but they are not more than a substitute for the creative work which he hopes now to be able to do in—of all places—Hollywood.



Gothic terror: (above) two scenes from "Vampyr," (below) torture of the suspected witch in "Day of Wrath."



Falconetti in "La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc."

**Dreyer
and
Falconetti**

WHEN FALCONETTI WENT ON THE SET she took off her make-up. At first she was horrified when she saw the close-ups of herself; she looked so naked! But soon, of course, she realised that there was something more important which had to be revealed, and was revealed; not her complexion, but her talent, her soul.

Dreyer's collaboration with Falconetti was in itself a violent drama, not a drama of opposites—on the contrary, of real collaboration, which can also be dramatic.

When Dreyer was about to shoot an important scene with Falconetti, everyone not directly concerned was banished from the set, and absolute silence was demanded (as a rule, in the silent film days, technicians and workmen would be hammering away in the corners of the studio). Sometimes he would put up screens round the group, so as to be completely undisturbed. When he was describing what he wanted, he would stammer and go red in the face, not from shyness or any hesitation as to what he meant, but simply from eagerness to make his intentions and feelings completely understood. The blotchy red face and the disjointed speech gave evidence of his unswerving belief that there is only one expression that is right, that can and must be found. But just because it seemed so difficult for him to express himself clearly, the actress was fired to work in with him with all her power. She was, as it were, activated into expressing what Dreyer could not show her, for it was something that could only be expressed in action, not speech, and she alone could do it, so she had to help him.

(From *A Film Director's Work* by Ebbe Neergaard, translated by Marianne Gilliam.)

PARIS—HOLLYWOOD

PARIS

THE SERIOUS economic difficulties with which the French cinema is currently faced are largely due, say the trade experts, to two factors—Government control of admission prices at a level incompatible with that of the rise in prices generally; and exorbitant taxation. In addition, there has been a marked decline in cinema attendance.

The problems facing the industry generally are many and complex—rationalisation of production methods and re-equipment of studios and laboratories; the financing of film production; competition arising from imported films; the development of foreign markets; the re-equipment and re-furnishing of cinema; and the efficacy of the Law of Aid to the cinema industry—but because of space considerations this article does not propose to discuss them; it merely limits itself to a brief survey of the questions of attendance, admission prices, and taxation. Sources of information are a booklet published by the *Confédération Nationale du Cinéma Français*, and the columns of the weekly trade journal *La Cinématographie Française*.

During the war years 1940 to 1945, cinema attendance rose steeply, 1945 figures recording an increase of nearly 80 per cent. on those for 1939. Since 1946, however, attendance has steadily declined and is now almost back at its pre-war level. Two of the reasons for this decline are, firstly, the fact that in 1946 the cinema lost its position as practically the only available form of entertainment (a position which had in the greater part been responsible for the increased audiences), and secondly, the reduced spending power of the public on account of the high cost of living.

Due to the scarcity of other forms of entertainment during the war, and lack of travel and holiday facilities, the Government regarded the cinema as a "necessity" and imposed a strict control on admission prices. The trade is now vigorously demanding that they should be freed from control.

Prices are currently limited to rates corresponding to only seven times the 1939 level (an average of 70 as against 10 francs), whereas the general rise in the cost of living is between fifteen and twenty times. And certain goods and services, such as raw film, laboratory work, and studio hire, all of which vitally affect the cost of film production, are completely free from control.

Although as regards admission prices the cinema was a "necessity", the Fiscal authorities did not hesitate to cash in on its temporary war-time prosperity, and imposed high taxation of a "luxury" order. Despite some slight concessions granted in 1948, the taxation rate for the cinema still remains very considerably higher than for other industries and businesses. A recent article in *La Cinématographie Française* quotes current tax rates of 6.5 per cent. and 8 per cent. levied on other businesses, compared with



Clouzot's new comedy, "Miquette et sa Mère." The ham touring company: (left to right) Dandy, Danièle Delorme, Louis Jouvet, Mireille Perrey.

the rate of nearly 35 per cent. paid by the cinema.

The question of taxation is further complicated by the fact that part is levied by the Government and part by Local Authorities, with the result that a measure of detaxation by the former may well be offset by increases imposed by the latter.

The *Confédération Nationale du Cinéma Français*, which groups trade interests, asks that taxation should be limited to a maximum of 20 per cent. (the pre-war level), which would include payments to both Government and Local Authorities.

The immediate conclusion, then, is that the first and most important steps towards economic stability in the French film industry are the freeing of admission prices from control, and detaxation.

Amongst current productions, the most interesting perhaps is H. G. Clouzot's latest subject, which is in complete contrast to his previous films, *Le Corbeau*, *Quai des Orfèvres* and *Manon*. It is *Miquette et sa Mère*, a light, sentimental comedy set in the year 1900 which deals with the amorous intrigues of an elderly Marquis (Saturnin Fabre) and his somewhat simple-minded nephew (Bourvil) with the pretty young Miquette (Danièle Delorme) and her attractive mother. Louis Jouvet is cast as an ageing and pretentious ham actor who runs a touring theatrical company which Miquette and her mother join.

The film, on which shooting is now practically completed, is adapted by Clouzot and Jean Ferry (his habitual script colleague) from a play. George Wakhévitch's décors include a reconstruction of the *Café du Globe*, where all the Paris Boulevard actors used to congregate.

PETER SIMMONS.

HOLLYWOOD

THE FIRST American film of Micheline Presle, who made such an impression in *Les Jeux Sont Faits* and *Le Diable au Corps*, gives her the part of a good-glamorous Parisian chanteuse, specially built (by writer-producer Casey Robinson) into a Hemingway story about the disillusion and bereavement of the ten-year-old son of an expatriate, crooked jockey ("My Old Man"), retitled for film purposes *The Big Fall*. Co-starring with Miss Presle—she too has been retitled, of course, though phonetically only: Prelle—is John Garfield, playing the idolised, ageing jockey. Jean Negulesco, who has been connected with somewhat routine hits like *Johnny Belinda* and *Road House* but once painted aspiringly on the Left Bank and was an assistant to producer Benjamin Glazer on *This is the Night* and *A Farewell to Arms*—amongst other not bad early-thirties Paramount films—directs.

As thankful as we all have been to see Disney return with *Ichabod And Mr. Toad* for the moment to cartoon making, the two parts of the film, made from Washington Irving's *The Headless Horseman* and Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*, get variant reactions. *The Headless Horseman*, which winds up the film and was felt no doubt to be the stronger element of the two, is a bloodless caricature almost of the Disney pattern without a single half moment that I can recollect of legitimate inspiration. There is genuine charm, on the other hand, to more than one passage of the *Mr. Toad* half, and the gayest of Toad's untrammelled buggy rides are as lighthearted as anything in Disney's best animal fantasies. Yet at no point could the film be said to betoken the slightest break with Disney's graphic past, his subjection to *fin de siècle* illustrational methods, the unshatterable egg-shaped forms. We are still within the circumscribed field of the conventional cartoon.

Splintered from Disney and staffed by some of his dissenting talent, the independent cartoon in Hollywood is a little explored segment of practically experimental work. Without pretending to the title—it would probably repudiate it—this little shreds-and-patches cartoon movement has the eagerness and gift for drastic invention which

avant-garde favours—plus, one cannot help pointing out, the practised craftsmanship in the art so seldom met with in better publicised recent "art-in-cinema" in this country. The war, as with other film forms, offered many cartoonists working in Army and Navy instructional units the opportunity, seconded by need, for considerable flexibility in their work. The movement is roughly ten years old, with

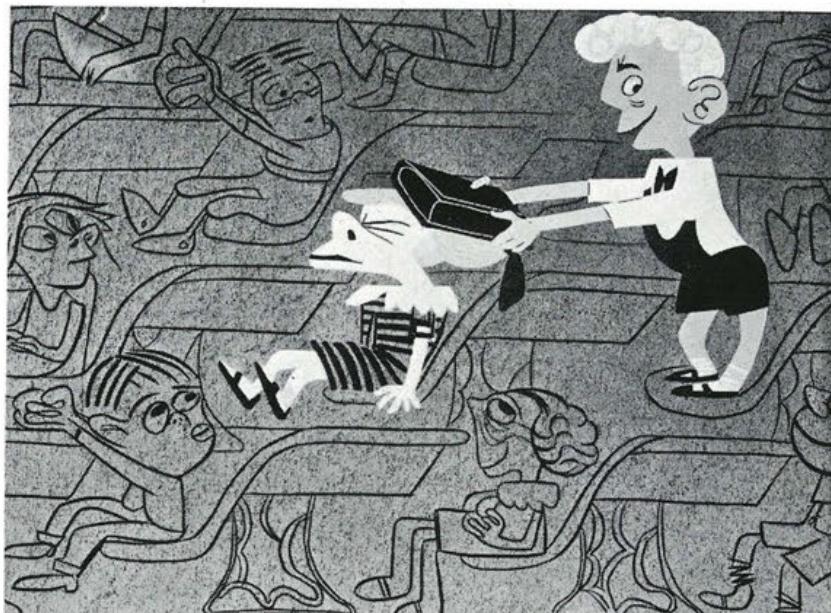


"TV Spot." Designed and directed by Theodore Geisel.

early scattered "incidents" taking place inside major cartoon studios and out. (Among these: the Chuck Jones-John McGleish-John McGrew *The Dover Boys at Pimento U*, and the several "Mina Bird" cartoons from the still interesting Chuck Jones unit at Warners; the John Hubley-John McGleish *Rocky Road to Ruin*, a bold, not wholly



"Flat Hatting." Designed and directed by John Hubley.



successful satire on the rags-to-riches theme, at Columbia.) The largest independent group to manage to consolidate itself is to-day known as U.P.A.—United Productions of America, and for it at one time or another during its first six years have worked nearly all of the new movement's leading artists.

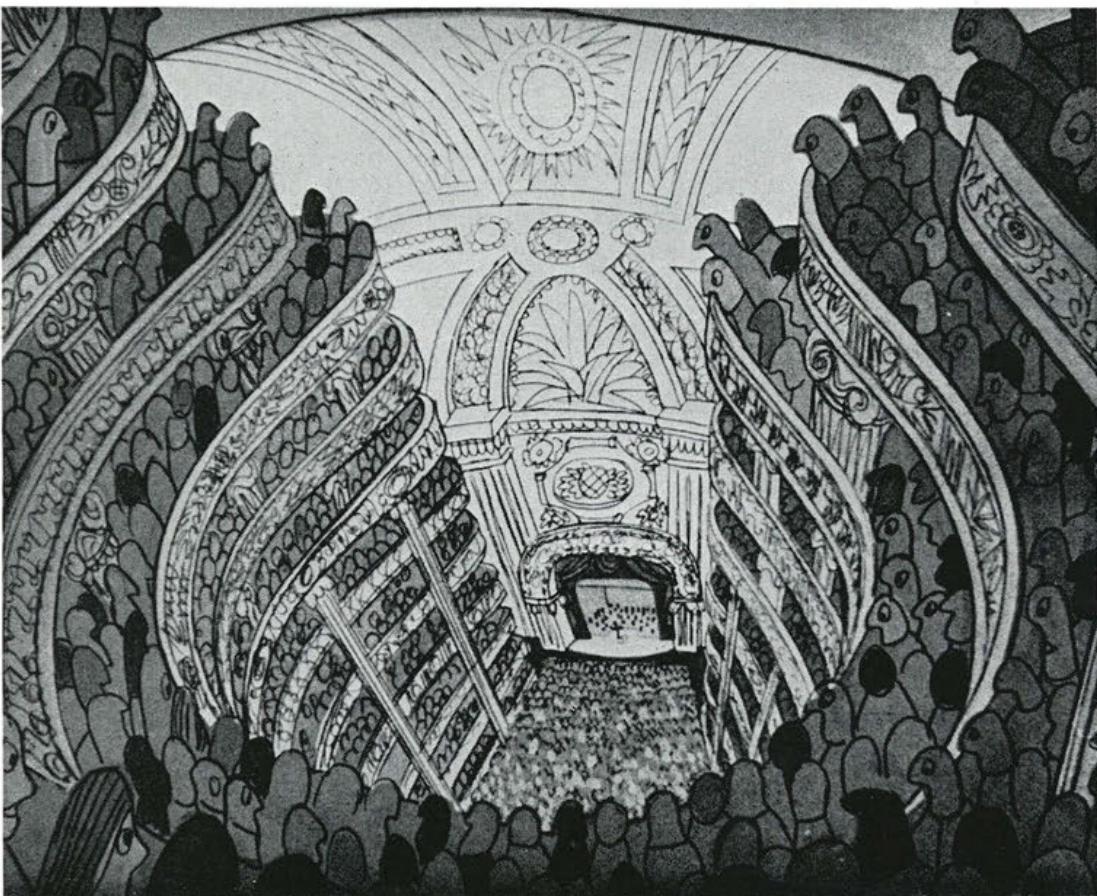
These rebels have upset the tyranny of the egg-shape by employing frank flatness and unreality in constantly refreshing and surprising ways, a rebellion too seldom noticed in the Disney fortress ever since the "Pink Elephant" sequence in *Dumbo*, the "Baby Weems" sequence in *The Reluctant Dragon*. The human animal has been brought back into a cartoon respectability that it has not enjoyed since silent cartoon series like "Colonel Heeza Liar", "Farmer Al Falfa" and "Canimated Noos". Nor is Disney's ever-recurring (1) adorable (2) baby (3) animal a U.P.A. formula. Over all there is some recognition that the graphic and colour adventures of this century belong to animated cartoons as properly as to other media.

U.P.A.'s two most famous films have been *Brotherhood Of Man* (against racism) and *Hell Bent For Election*, a pro-Roosevelt campaign document—1944—sponsored along with *Brotherhood* by the United Automobile Worker, both of which got *Life* spreads. And there have been others as good and better like *Flat Hatting*, one of a long and continuing series for the Navy's Flight Safety Division; *Swab Your Choppers*, for the same arm's Bureau of Medicine and Surgery—a film of particular interest for its graphic simplification and stretches of non-animated action illusion. All of these films have been made for special, though not necessarily negligibly-sized audiences, but for one reason or another have by-passed the regular theatres.

Last year Columbia Pictures gave U.P.A. a five-year contract for sixty one-reel cartoons. The first two of these, continuing an established Columbia series (the "Fox and Crow" series), were released in September and December of last year. There have been two more delivered this year (with production tempo accelerating). The new series' title, which will continue hereafter, is "Jolly Frolics". The four cartoons available so far carry titles *Robin Hoodlum*, *The Magic Fluke*, *The Ragtime Bear* and *Punchy de Lion*.

The quality characterising the first three (I have not seen *Punchy de Lion*) is abundance. In a cartoon series where normally all is uniformity, their individuality of plan and overall idea, non-repeating dramatis personae, and personal graphic styles, are unheard-of extravagances. *Robin Hoodlum*'s Gilbertian libretto is too intricate almost for comprehension at one viewing, with all the sound and sight distractions; without impeding movement a valid sound-speech effect is gotten in the dialogue take-off of British stage (film also?) accent excesses. In *The Magic Fluke* an unaccustomed pointing up of background is in the detail and colour richness (an antique gold) given tiers of baroque galleries up which, in one camera effect, we go endlessly climbing. *The Ragtime Bear*—the best so far—corrects *Hoodlum*'s diffuseness, is funnier than *Magic Fluke*. It has all kinds of style: drawing reminiscent of *Flat Hatting*'s—touchstone on graphics; a sparseness in the music score to give in-the-room impact to the delightful sheerness of unaccompanied banjo. Its introduction of human characters, notably the short-tempered, always almost catastrophically near-sighted Mr. Magoo—of human characters, that is, not grotesque-ified or single-traited only, like Popeye—will bear watching.

HAROLD LEONARD.



"*The Magic Fluke.*" Designer, William Hurtz: supervisor, John Hubley.

Second Opinion

TWO FACES UNDER ONE HAT

Tyrone Guthrie

FILMS CAN BE REGARDED either as a commercial or a cultural product. Unfortunately it is seldom that the commercially successful film can be applauded for cultural significance; and the more efficiently film-making is organised as an Industry the less chance it has to develop as an Art.

I assume that the industrial standard of film success is quantitative; it can be measured in money, and depends on the number of customers who will pay for admission.

This does not apply, however, to *artistic* success. Here the standard is qualitative; it is harder to assess; indeed impossible to assess in objective terms. And one is forced to rely too much on the published reactions of certain newspaper critics; however experienced, impartial and cultivated they may be, their taste is still subjective. There is no objective standard of Good Taste in regard to current works of art.

In matters of artistic judgment, popular taste hardly ever agrees with that of the expert. This divergence is most apparent in the case of so widely distributed a product as a film. No one can find this surprising. To be a Smash-Hit a film must deal with a complex of ideas and emotions that are, at a given period, of enormously wide acceptability. The Smash-Hit will certainly not be deficient in Human Interest, if this term be generously defined, but will almost certainly have neither subtlety nor originality nor strong emotional force; for subtlety implies something beyond the average intellectual capacity; originality (the antithesis of familiarity) is always hateful to the majority; and strong emotional force must, if capable of attracting, also be capable of repelling, must create friends as well as enemies.

I consider therefore that in artistic matters generally, and in films particularly, there must always exist a divergence between quantity and quality, Industry and Art. If this be so, then it is time we seriously considered whether the two should not be separately organised.

I suggest that this is a question which discussion in the press about the present crisis in British films has under-stressed. The most debated question has been how to organise the Industry so that it will make money. Surely this is comparatively unimportant. Of course the Industry will survive, by more economical and sensible budgeting, and by attending more carefully to its job—Popular Entertainment.

The trouble about the British Film Industry is that, for a number of reasons, it Got Ideas Above Its Station.

People were able to talk themselves into important jobs at inflated salaries who had no experience of popular entertainment; no flair for gauging popular taste; insufficient technical knowledge; but who were able to get at the consciences and inferiority complexes of the bewildered Moguls of Mushroom Film Empires.

Worse still, this led to a lot of extravagant spending upon films which have turned out to be neither good works of art, according to the gospel of critics, nor good business propositions, according to the gospel of box-

office—like Barrie's Darling Little Sillies, they didn't quite know what they were.

I am not for one instant suggesting that there should be no Artistic Pictures, no uncommercial Experiment; but by muddling Art and Industry together, by trying to serve God and Mammon, British films are in their present mess.

At the present moment films are one of the most powerful means of expression in man's possession. It is frightening to hear the present crisis discussed merely in terms of Tax Reduction, Returns on Invested Capital, Pinewood versus Hollywood, and a lot of trivial market-place chattering.

An opportunity has now come for the Community to recognise the Film, not as an Industry, nor even just as an Art, but as an incalculably important Vehicle of Ideas.

But there is clearly a problem: how is the State (whether disguised as a National Film Corporation or in some other fancy hat) to decide what is, or is not, worth support?

The problem is serious, but it would surely be poor-spirited to assume it insoluble, and therefore reject the principle of state-aid. I shall return to this in a moment.

Meanwhile I only plead that, at the outset of the State's intervention into the affairs of Film Industry and Film Art, it be admitted that artistic and commercial aims are not only divergent but irreconcilable. If artistic success is achieved, it will almost certainly be at the expense of popularity. And again, since judgment must be subjective, some body of persons will have to accept responsibility for decisions which will quite often be demonstrably wrong and demonstrably expensive.

If, however, we are not prepared to finance such risks, out of public funds, then we must either hand over this colossally powerful medium of expression to solely commercial exploitation, or continue the present policy of compromise between Art and Industry—the policy whose bitter and humiliating fruit is at present in our mouths.

Since it may reasonably be objected that I have brushed aside too easily the problem of how to accept Public Assistance without also accepting Public Control, let me conclude by recalling instances of three analogous activities which cannot be considered solely in terms of commercial success.

Few people seriously question, for instance, the propriety of the State's assistance to Education, and the degree of control exercised over schools by the Board of Education.

The B.B.C., while not the recipient of public funds, is none the less a Public Corporation responsible to Parliament. It is frequently attacked for being a Monopoly. But I see less restriction of programme for the listener under existing conditions of Radio than for the filmgoer under existing conditions of cinema ownership and picture distribution. The Third Programme aims whole-heartedly at qualitative standards; the Light at quantitative standards; the Home Service at a balanced compromise, possible only because the two extremes are already being

(Continued on page 36)

REALISM: *A Personal View*

Paul Strand



"*The Grapes of Wrath.*" Henry Fonda.

In a world which likes to know all the answers, some questions are always in danger of being dismissed as naive. To ask yet again, "What is realism?" might seem to come under this category. Nevertheless, in view of the fact that so many of the best "realistic" films this year have been notable, if not for defeatism, then for their insistence on the more disagreeable aspects of human life, Paul Strand's plea for a higher value to be put upon the word should not be so easily dismissed. Paul Strand worked for many years in Mexico, notably as cameraman and scriptwriter of *The Wave*, directed by Fred Zinneman (whose *The Search* was recently shown in this country). He made *Heart of Spain* in 1937, and with Leo Hurwitz in 1942 a film about labour troubles in the U.S.A., *Native Land*. The substance of this article is that of an address given by Mr. Strand at the International Congress of Cinema in Perugia during September, 1949.

THE WORD REALISM has been used so frequently that it is important for us to have complete clarity about its meaning. Since, however, words in themselves are not always the same in their meaning, frequently signifying different things to different people, I think this word "realism" should be discussed and defined. I should like, therefore, to try to explain what I mean when, as a film-maker, I speak of realism.

To begin with a negative statement, realism is not the mere recording of things as they are, seen through dispassionate eyes in which all things are of equal value, of equal interest—the eyes of a man who thinks he stands above life, above good and evil. Neither does realism

consist in the description, no matter how honest, of the exceptional or sensational in life. There is a certain kind of realism in the Hollywood film of violence; the torn and bleeding face of a prizefighter is true in real life. But such truth has no purpose, except to excite the sadistic and masochistic feelings of the audience—to exploit them on an emotional level. For there is such a thing as emotional exploitation, as well as economic exploitation; in fact they often go together and are equally repulsive. We must reject both this venal realism as well as the mere slice-of-life naturalism which is completely static in its unwillingness to be involved in the struggle of man towards a better and a fuller life.



REALISM

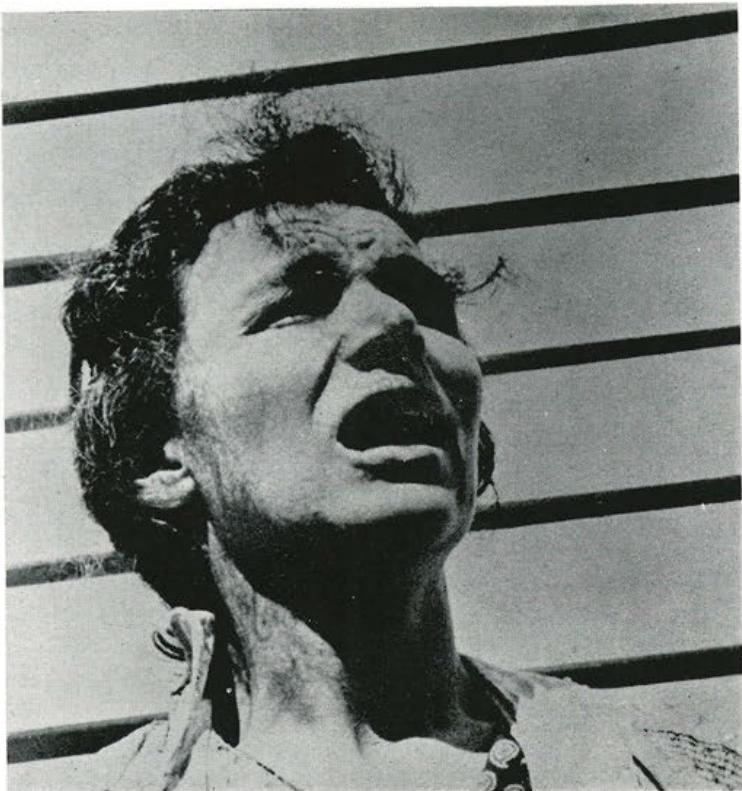
Above, left and right, are scenes from three films. Left: professional actors: Jean Gabin and Anna Magnani in "Rome, Open City"; right: the child actor in "The Quiet American" dramatised document of a Negro boy, and a Mexican peasant boy in a fragment of Eisenstein's uncom-



People

from two fiction films employing
in "La Grande Illusion" and
in City." Below, left and right,
One," an independently-made
try about the problems of a
sant in "Time in the Sun," a
mpleted film about Mexico.





Paul Strand's "Native Land."

On the contrary we should conceive of realism as dynamic, as truth which sees and understands a changing world and in its turn is capable of changing it, in the interests of peace, human progress, and the eradication of human misery and cruelty, and towards the unity of all people. We must take sides. Is it not perfectly clear that in *Open City*, Rossellini as a man and as a film artist, was on the side of the resistance to fascism? There is no mere recording of events, from some sort of impersonal height above the battle for human freedom. Here in this film is violence in its most ugly and brutal form—not isolated, not to entertain the audience, but to revolt them, and more important, to remind them of their own heroism as it was expressed in the resistance leaders who were tortured and killed. To me this is still perhaps the greatest of Italian films, because it contains a great heroic resolution, the resolution of resistance in action, by the people, in the interests of all people.

There has been a long tradition of realism in films, one for which I think we should be very grateful and use to the fullest. We do not start from the beginning. To mention a few such films: *Potemkin*, *Baltic Deputy*, *Chapaev*, the trilogy of the life of Gorky, *The Rainbow* and many others, are the great Soviet contributions to this tradition. One cannot also forget the Pabst films, *Kamaradschaft*, and the *Drei Groschen Oper*, and the early René Clair and Renoir films. And last, but not least, that special artist of the cinema, one of the greatest—Charles Chaplin.

In America, too, we have a remarkable tradition of realistic films, which is primarily rooted in our documentary film movement, but which also produced in Hollywood such films as *Grapes of Wrath*, *The Informer* and, during the war, the outstanding *Little Foxes* and *Watch on the Rhine* by Lillian Hellman, the film *Objective Burma* written by Alvah Bessie, and the excellent *Why We Fight* series made by Capra, and the film about the negro soldier

made by Carleton Moss, also made for the army. Going back to the pre-war years, which were years of creative resurgence everywhere, we find American documentary films of a very special character. This character was one of great forthrightness in telling the truth and calling for action. They might be called films of warning. I refer particularly to films about the Spanish Civil War and the Chinese resistance to Japanese aggression; *Heart of Spain* and *China Strikes Back*, *Return to Life* produced by Frontier Films, the splendid *Spanish Earth* and *The Four Hundred Million* of Joris Ivens.

What was the character and purpose of these films? Using documentary material only, these films tried to warn Americans of the rising tide of fascism, its danger to our country unless it was stopped then. And these films said directly: support the Spanish Republic, support the Chinese people in their struggle. During this period, the progressive administration of Roosevelt, the Government itself, also made several films directed by Pare Lorentz: *The Plow That Broke the Plains* and *The River* which warned America that much of our natural resources had been squandered and called for a fight against soil erosion, for better farming methods, for reforestation, etc. And there were other films, of which perhaps *Native Land* was a culmination. This film is more experimental in form, containing as it does re-enacted stories with actors as well as documentary material. Its content, based on the investigation of a Committee of the United States Senate, was the warning that American Civil liberties, and especially the rights of labour, were in danger; that they had to be defended. It said that the American people had many times before had to fight for their basic freedoms and had done so under the leadership of Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln. It called upon them to defend their rights again, vigilantly. And although to-day, as in many other countries, it has become increasingly difficult to make realistic films in America, we have recently had that very fine and sensitive film document *The Quiet One*, which won the Critics' Prize at Venice.

True, none of these films find their way to the whole American film audience because the channels of distribution are not now available to foreign and truly independent films. Nevertheless, we can assume that the impact of such films as *Open City*, *Paisa*, *Shoeshine* and others, would be felt equally by audiences all over America could they see these remarkable films. Furthermore, I think that this quick reaction on the part of American audiences to Italian films results precisely because we too have a tradition of realism which is close to theirs in its simplicity and directness of statement.

On the formal aesthetic side of these Italian films, which in a work of art should be the product of the content, one notes the beautiful choice and direction of actors. It is wonderful to find real people doing real things on the screen. Make-up is used expressively and not to prettify ageing beauties, male and female, and the camera lenses are not covered with gauzes to destroy the form and texture of things and faces. Consciously or not, the Italians have rediscovered many of the valuable elements of the silent days, the expressive value of objects, of pantomime and the tremendous value of honest photography.

These are some of the things in content and form which I believe give films life, things which will enrich the great tradition of film-making everywhere in the world.

Critics' Forum

NEGRO FILMS

Richard Winnington



Jeanne Crain as Pinky.

HOLLYWOOD'S FIRST THREE "colour-bar" films have already grossed more than 7,000,000 dollars at the American box-office. Here is a gauge of the readiness of audiences to welcome any sign of freshness from an industry that has gone tired on them. And here too, is evidence of the quickness with which that industry can still recognise, exploit and control a trend. The trend emanates from the conscience which, to the advantage of the cinema, has always dogged Hollywood. The trail was laid with *Crossfire* and *Gentleman's Agreement*, dramatically effective films that flirted with the "Jewish problem". Making them called for courage and discredited their producers at the time. To their box-office rehabilitation *Home Of The Brave*, *Pinky*, *Lost Boundaries* and other "racials" in progress can be credited. The flirtation has been transferred to the safer areas of the "negro problem" where a multifarious, multi-coloured selection of special cases offer themselves for dramatisation.

Of the three "cases" under review the most heavily emotionalised and the most spuriously solved is that of the full-blooded Negro hero of *Home Of The Brave*, an adapta-

tion of Arthur Laurent's play in which the hero was a Jew. Yet the fact that James Edwards is a Negro as much as the eloquence of his acting makes him easily the outstanding figure of all three films.

We see him first in a familiar setting—a Pacific Army base during the war—stretched out in a critical state of amnesia and paralysis while the army psychiatrist stands over with the hypodermic syringe. Drug-induced flashbacks trace the root of his sickness to that moment of extreme danger in the jungle when his childhood friend—the only white man he trusted—bites short the odiously familiar expletive "Why you yellow bellied N...!" An unbearable sense of guilt for the momentarily felt joy when his friend is killed piles on to an already formidable racial neurosis and cracks him down.

The tough friendly psychiatrist and the Negro's conscience-stricken white "buddies" effect the cure—by persuading him that his joy was an instinctive reaction of relief at his own safety, an emotion experienced in similar circumstances by the best of white soldiers. A lush Hollywood ending guarantees his future as a happy



Elia Kazan, director of "Pinky."

Negro bartender and nullifies the sympathy and intelligence that have made plausible an essentially theatrical conception of the problem. In fact the admirable qualities of direction, acting and writing in Mark Robson's film only emphasise its abortiveness.

The sell-out in *Pinky* is subtler. *Pinky* (well, but not brilliantly played by Jeanne Crain) is a Negro girl of unblemished white pigmentation whose old darkie grandmother (beautifully played by Ethel Waters) has pinched and saved to send her to college. There she had fallen into the easy temptation of passing as white, and as such falling in love with a white doctor (William Lundigan). Returning as a graduate nurse to the Cabin in the South, the sensitive and civilised *Pinky* is subjected to the full litany of racial prejudice, from both sides of the bar. Both negroes and whites hate her white skin and city manners. The film valuably succeeds in showing the roots of that prejudice to be as deep on one side as the other.

Pinky's ordeal is brought home by the director, Elia Kazan, in vivid, compelling incidents—the instantaneous change from servility to savagery by the police when *Pinky*, involved (and out-acted) in a brawl with Nina Mae McKinney, tells them she is coloured; the scene in the store; her pursuit at night by two drunken white men.

But *Pinky's* dilemma—shall she forsake her race and become "white" or proclaim it and lose her lover?—is side-tracked into never-never-land. There is a dying, wise old *patronne* (Ethel Barrymore) to restore her to proper Negro pride, and leave her the family mansion. There is an

upstanding Southern judge to uphold the will and flout a court seething with lynching fever. And a final celibate solace for *Pinky*—since the world's most polyglot Democracy cannot abide a hint of miscegenation—is running her mansion as a super clinic for Negro children, manned by a Negro staff.

All this apart, the cardinal crippling evasion of *Pinky* lies in the selection of an established white film actress to play the heroine. Thus is the audience insulated against the shock of seeing white and Negro embrace, against any effect of realism. I do not doubt that *Pinky* will leave Negro baiters comfortably purged and as rabid as ever, and I have even less doubts as to its effects on Negroes. As for average audiences: they will come from *Pinky*, touched, entertained and unperturbed by a well made and well acted film drama.

Lost Boundaries is a Louis de Rochemont (*Boomerang*) production, based on a Readers' Digest true account of a New Hampshire family. Though it is the soberest and least artistically titivated of the three films, its message is the same—black is black and white is white and never the twain shall meet.

A young, talented, light-skinned Negro doctor, through lack of professional openings, accepts a lucrative practice as a white doctor in Keenham, New Hampshire, 1922. He and his family are accepted unquestionably as white, and as the years pass he becomes a beloved and leading citizen. His attempted enlistment as a medical officer in the Navy discloses his race and forces him to confess the fact to his son and daughter, who have developed into healthy American campus types. The shock drives the son on a feverish *Odyssey* through Harlem, from which he returns resigned and ready to accept his new status. Both he and the girl break off relations with the white persons they love, and the father publicly announces himself as a Negro.

Keenham, New Hampshire, is on its mettle, but an emotional appeal by the Rector in church brings toleration, and the people make it clear that "a man's ability, honesty and kindness have nothing to do with the colour of his skin". (The love affairs of the son and daughter are left in the air.) All of which, high-minded and sincere though it may be, looks more like a claim for the fineness of Keenham (for doing no more than a Christian community could do and keep face) than one for the worthy doctor who had served it for years. It is indeed a special case, calculated to improve white conceit and preserve the bar. The film is directed flatly and unimaginatively by Alfred Werker; the doctor and family are played mainly by unknown and apparently white actors.

I praised these films at the time for their courage in approaching an evil any civilised man wants to see ironed out flat. But the unease that was there has crystallised with second thoughts. Films that raise such issues and baulk them are not merely negative but dangerous. And it is necessary to say so firmly, since they are trading heavily on their "progressiveness". When a racial film is ruthlessly honest in its issues, or when it unambiguously implies equal rights and status for the American Negro (including the assumption that intermarriage with whites is no less unobjectionable and irrelevant than between Jew and Gentile, Catholic or Protestant), or when it just so much as documents a plain, typical story, without recourse to a fake solution; then will be the occasion, I think, to bring out the word courage.

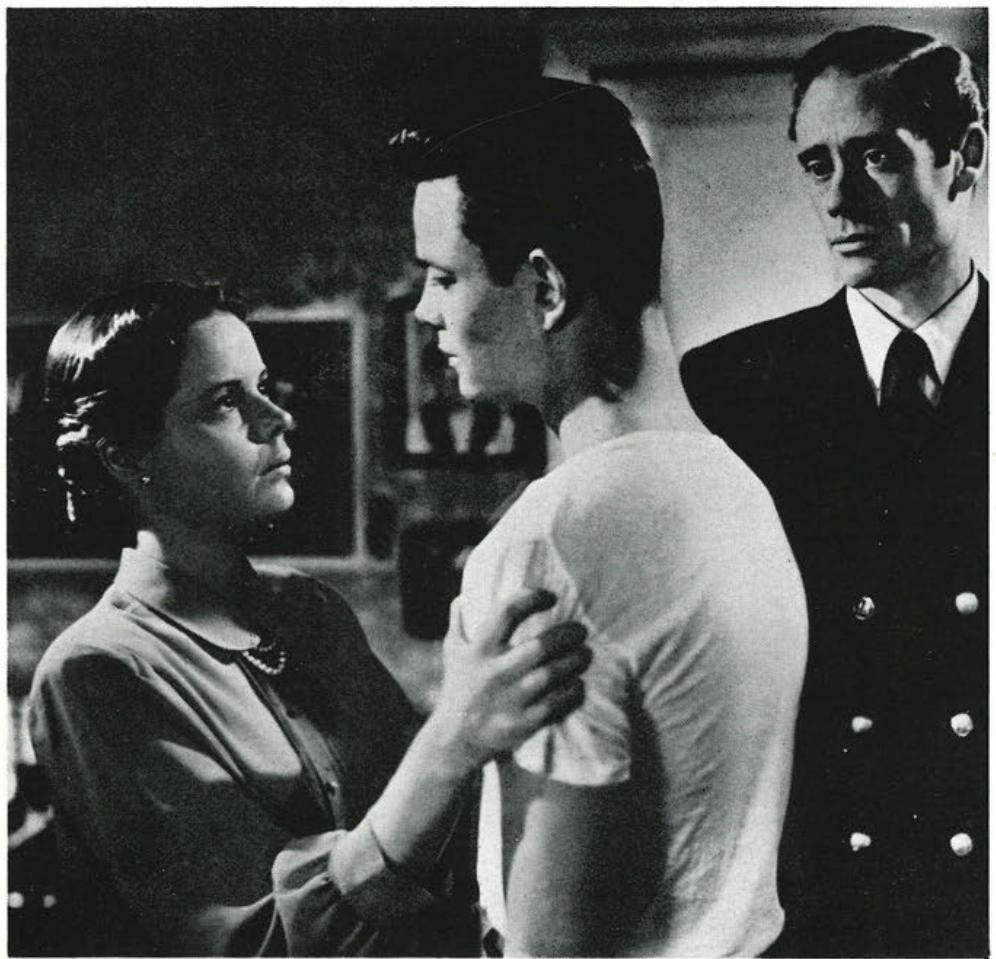


Left: the courtroom scene. *The Lawyer* (Dan Riss) interrogates Pinky's grandmother (Ethel Waters). Below: half-white, white and black. Jeanne Crain, Arthur Hunnicutt, Frederick O'Neal, Nina Mae McKinney.

Pinky



Left: after the court-case. Ethel Waters, Jeanne Crain, William Lundigan.



"Lost Boundaries" Beatrice Pearson, Richard Hylton, Mel Ferrer.



"Home of the Brave" Jeff Corey, the psychologist, and James Edwards.

HERE TO-DAY . . .

LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN (Universal-International, American) and **THE RECKLESS MOMENT** (Columbia, American). Here to-day but not, it seems, unfortunately, here to stay, are two films of considerable interest, both directed by Max Ophuls. *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, the most important one, has in fact received no press-show, no circuit booking, and only a "floating" release—which restricts it to independent cinemas up and down the country.

Ophuls, born in Germany 47 years ago, is a director of marked individuality; *Liebelei* (1933) was the first film to gain him notice—a sad, romantic episode set in Vienna before the first world war, told with great delicacy, charm and subtle, unostentatious feeling for period. This same Vienna with its nostalgic waltzes and formal elegance, and another unhappy little love-story, Ophuls has taken up again, fifteen years later, in Hollywood. An adolescent girl conceives a romantic passion for a dissipated, handsome young pianist; years later, they meet by chance one night; he takes her for an adventuress, makes love to her, and the next day has to leave for Italy for a concert. He forgets about her; she bears his child, marries for security. Again after many years they meet, again he is attracted to her, and breaks her heart by not remembering her. Her son dies of typhus, and she contracts it from him; before dying, she writes a long letter to Stefan, recapitulating their whole affair.

The film has a rare elegance, grace and tenderness; a romanticised version of Stefan Zweig's more grim and realistic story. Its touch is oblique, magical, suggesting rather than stating: the re-creation of Vienna—aided by Alexander Golitzen's light, formal sets and an agreeable softness of tone achieved by Franz Planer's camerawork—is astonishing for a film made in Hollywood. There are only one or two momentary flaws caused by the



"*Letter from an Unknown Woman.*"

Americanism of minor characters. To the part of Lisa, Joan Fontaine brings a gentleness, beauty and fragile composure that are very touching; and Louis Jourdan catches exactly the temperament of Stefan—easy, charming, dissolute.

This is the epitome of the romantic film—a lost love in a lost age that seems half make-believe, and yet leaves behind it the ache of nostalgia.

After *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, Ophuls made *Caught*—his talent for giving depth and intimacy to characters making novelettish material appear more than it was worth—and then *The Reckless Moment*. Here again the material is not really satisfactory, but his handling of it, and a well constructed script with some excellent dialogue (one notices on the credits the name of Mel Dinelli, who was responsible for *The Window*), make it unexpectedly absorbing. The film tells of an American middle-class family whose life is almost shattered by the adolescent daughter's infatuation with a philanderer—an accident leads to his death; some letters written by the girl get into the hands of a blackmailer. All takes place in a few days before Christmas; the father is abroad, the mother has to take the whole situation upon herself. Where the film excels is in incidental observation of family life, in making the mother's predicament real and immediate; the second half, in which attention switches to the character of the blackmailer and his change of heart, is not convincing, though the actors—Joan Bennett and James Mason—also do their best.

As a craftsman, a virtuoso, Ophuls is fascinating in his refinement: the fluency (the camera in his films is always very agile, though never obtrusively so), the avoidance of any "large" effect—most noticeably, the lack of close-ups—and the quick flair for character and atmosphere. Call it, if you like, the style of a minor artist—but an artist who, within his range and with good material, as in *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, is most rewarding.



"*The Reckless Moment.*" Shepperd Strudwick, Joan Bennett.

EDITING

Karel Reisz

CONTEMPORARY FILM CRITICISM seems largely to be concerned with evaluating three things: the merit of a film's plot, the standard of acting, and the aptness and quality of the dialogue. If Pudovkin's belief that "the foundation of film art is *editing*" has any validity to-day, then these criteria are surely inadequate. Of all the contributions which go into the creation of a complete film, the film editor's part is probably least appreciated by the critic and cinema-goer. Since, as far as I know, this publication is unique in devoting any space to the problem at all, it may not be out of place to start with attempting to define some terms of reference.

Film editing involves at least three separate, if inter-dependent, functions: the choice of camera set-ups (closeness to actors, angles), bearing in mind the way in which the shots will finally be assembled; the timing of shots to get the best dramatic effect out of the material photographed; and the more positive function of editing—the choice of series of shot juxtapositions, which *in themselves* create the desired effects. The choice of effective camera set-ups and sensitive timing of shots is a *sine qua non* of good filmmaking. The selection of an expressive flow of images—and this is what Pudovkin means by *editing*—is important on a different and more fundamental level. Here the editor is no longer solely responsible. Writer, director, and, to a lesser degree, cameraman and sound crew must be integrally involved, and it will become almost impossible to assign credit to any single individual.

To-day, unfortunately, Pudovkin's dictum rings a little hollow. For various reasons, most scripts are written primarily in terms of dialogue to be brought to life by the actors. Shots are joined together as smoothly as possible in order not to distract from the actors' performances. The modern editor's chief preoccupation is indeed primarily with smoothness (cutting his shots in such a way as to make the shot-to-shot transition almost imperceptible), and with timing his cuts so as to give the sequence a tempo appropriate to its mood.

Take for example *The Third Man*. A great measure of the film's effectiveness comes from the careful direction of innumerable details, mainly in the acting. This might have made for a slow-moving film. Yet *The Third Man* moves with a momentum which does not let us relax for a single moment. In many passages we are taken straight into the middle of the action, the usual establishing of situation at a minimum; when a climax or main point of interest is reached, it is never allowed to lapse into anti-climax, but instead, with a quick dissolve, we are plunged straight into the next sequence; lastly, the film does not contain a single fade—presumably on the grounds that a blank screen is not

telling the audience anything and the loss of pace is not worth the effect created. All this is designed to squeeze the maximum pace and interest from the given set of situations, while at the same time preserving a most respectful regard for the actors' timing. In other words, the film is well edited without on the whole creating its effects through planned shot juxtapositions.

Editing is used in a more functional way in Eisenstein's films, in certain sequences in *Citizen Kane* or, more recently, in *The Set-Up*, where the construction and flow of images *are* the film. A recent film, *Criss Cross* (otherwise quite unremarkable), contains a passage of this kind which is perhaps worth our attention. The hero (Burt Lancaster) has returned to his home town after several years' absence and first sees his wife (Yvonne De Carlo) from whom he has been separated, across a crowded dance-floor. The band is playing a shrill, savage dance tune (called Voodoo Moon and described as an "Afro-Cuban" number) which gets louder and wilder as the sequence progresses. We are shown a great many shots of the band, soloists and group; shots of Lancaster standing in the doorway, starting with a long shot and reaching close-up at the climax; and shots of his wife unaware of his presence, completely oblivious to her surroundings, as she goes through the frenzied motions of the dance. Not a word is spoken during the whole passage, yet the tension created is almost unbearable; the wife's fickleness, the hero's feeling of having been ousted and the maddening gaiety and irrelevance of the surroundings under which he again meets his wife are conveyed with a cruel conviction. The effect is achieved by the construction of the sequence (neither of the players does any "acting" to speak of). Meaning is given to the actors' appearance by the context, a meaning which *on* amount of dialogue could have conveyed.

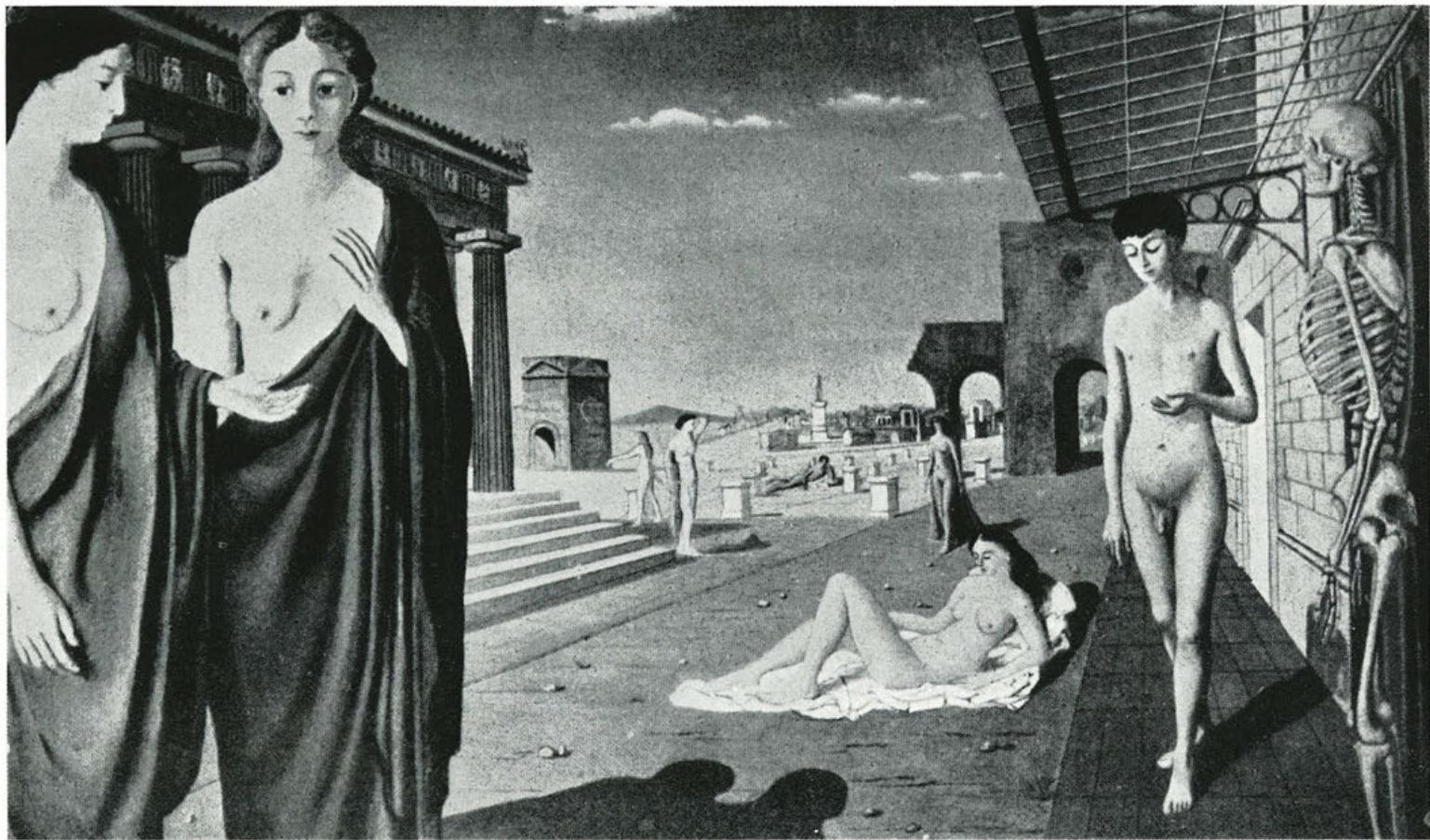
The contribution of editing to a film must therefore be evaluated on two different levels: the cutting of material already made effective by the acting, which needs only to be assembled efficiently—by no means a simple task; and secondly, the editing of a passage to convey its meaning through particular shot juxtaposition. The latter is the positive contribution of editing and the one which I shall emphasise subsequently: it will be a plea for the creatively edited, visual sequence in which dialogue plays only a secondary role. This is not to say that the visual sequence is in some way better, more "climactic" than the dialogue scene. It is simply to stress that the primarily visual sequence can be made to evoke a range of emotions which are different in kind from those conveyed by the dialogue scene. If you are not convinced, go and see *Louisiana Story* again.

"*Criss Cross.*" Four shots from the night-club scene: hero (Burt Lancaster), band and soloists, and wife (Yvonne de Carlo).



FILM AND FINE ARTS

Jean Quéval

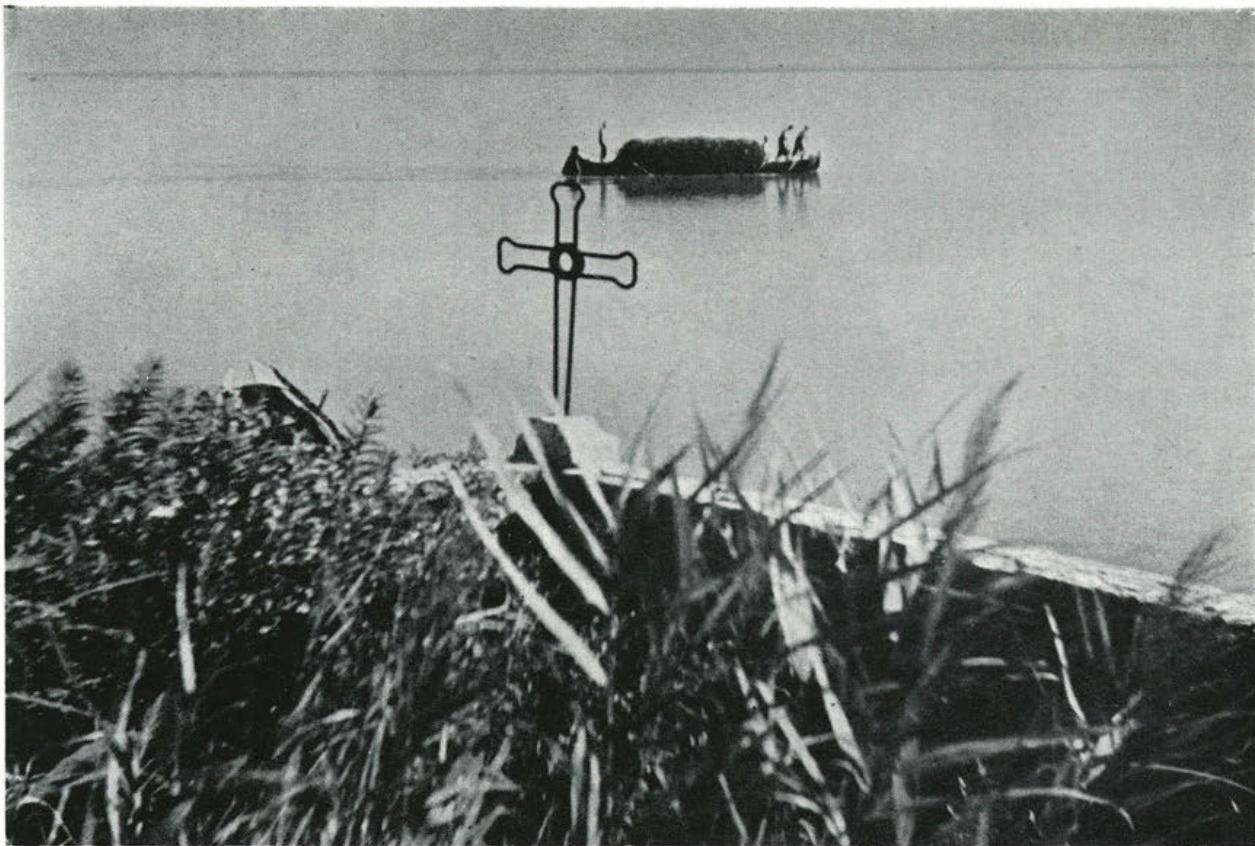


"Le Monde de Paul Delvaux."

DO YOU KNOW PAUL DELVAUX? He is a Belgian surrealist painter. His water colour pictures are, I am told, light and pretty; he is better known, however, for his more ambitious oil paintings, in which he has obviously been at great pains to express a strange world of his own. I am afraid that surrealism deprived of beauty—by which, needless to say, I do not mean the polished and nice, non-committal affairs so dearly loved by pundits of the Royal Academy—remains meaningless to me: and I find little beauty in these sombre compositions of identical and mysterious nudes surrounded by solemn overdressed gentlemen. They are not altogether ineffective paintings, but one feels the artist is asking even the goodwill amateur too much for too dubious a reward. Recently a film was made from these paintings, called *Le Monde de Paul Delvaux*. Under Henri Storck's direction, the camera is in motion most of the time, but in a smooth, unobtrusive, barely noticeable manner. The music by the Belgian composer, André Souris, is effective and well timed. A poem by Paul Eluard, in itself minor, provides a lyrical running commentary and fits in miraculously well. Then the strange, silent world of Delvaux becomes intelligible and alive; its black, white and grey colours give it the very beauty lacking in the painter's work; a keen sense of perspective is added; the nudes, fascinating, blind—like women in quest of a happiness

perpetually eluding them—are creatures very like ourselves, yet remote. From the standpoint of this article, however, I want to emphasise that here is a case of a film finding its material in painting and improving upon it, and experimenting with the *film* as a specific medium. It is the only case.

This is not surprising: films on the fine arts—painting, sculpture, archaeology and architecture—are films only in the second place. They find their material in other media, and remain subordinate to already existing works of a different nature. But it does not follow that such films necessarily exclude any serious attempt at re-creation. The most remarkable, if not the most daring, school is the Italian one. Luciano Emmer (not to mention his *bras droit*, Enrico Gras) is of course the indisputable leader of that school, although it would be unfair to ignore the intelligent short pieces of the Venetian, Francesco Pasinetti, who died, alas, a few months ago. Emmer's works take their material mainly from what one might call, irreverently, the Italian iconography of Catholic mythology: from Giotto, Carpaccio, Piero della Francesca and others. He is a filmmaker of considerable gifts, for his poetic documentaries on Venice are also extremely beautiful and display a painter's sense of composition. To my mind, however, the most interesting film in the category that one may



Luciano Emmer's "Isole della Laguna."

define, for want of anything more satisfactory, as the dramatisation of the fine arts, is a French one: *Van Gogh*, by Alain Resnais and Gaston Diehl.

The difficulty in this case was to present, as well as a portrait, a true biography through the artist's self-portraits, depicting him at various significant stages of his life and career. It is doubtful whether such an undertaking has any value as an example, and probably the makers doubted it themselves. But, example or not, it is a good illustration of the phenomenon of dramatised painting. To build a film on a bare, tragic theme, with the argument traced by a commentary at once informative and poetic, and with an aesthetic emotional interest lying in background music—this was the problem. Thus, while the films of pure popularisation communicate at times (and too often) an impression of commentary illustrated, if one may say so, by animated stills, we are this time in the presence of a film: a work of secondary character, in many ways incomplete and inadequate, but a genuine and original re-creation. As so often happens in the cinema, it opens and closes an issue.

The much talked of and undeniably important *Rubens*, made by Henri Storck from a script by another Belgian, Paul Haesaerts, belongs both to the genre of filmed portrait and of dramatised painting. Let it be noted, incidentally, that another film was shot on the same master by a Frenchman, René Huyghe, in 1938, under the title *Rubens and his Time*: it was a rather slapdash study of the principal Flemish painters, based on pictures in the Louvre. But with the newer film we are in the presence of a work of unusual breadth and ambition. Paul Haesaerts, an art historian, scoured Europe for his material. In collaboration with Storck, he made a film which is not only an illustrated

lecture on technique, but also an attempt to estimate the importance and influence of Rubens, a filmed portrait, a lesson in comparative history, a sociological reflection on the artist's condition at the time, and, as with Emmer, an ample illustration of the themes of Christian iconography. It seems not altogether fair to write anything on this film until one has seen it several times and swotted up one's Rubens—but whose fault is it if, to begin with, the abundance of dishes takes away the appetite? There is something monstrously heterogeneous in the very enterprise. After all, a single canvas of Rubens is enough for an afternoon's contemplation. Here is a reasonably serious, if at times very naive attempt to expound all the aspects of his life's work in less than ninety minutes. I should have thought that surfeit was inevitable.

The film also emphasises the existence of another barrier; that of finding the right rhythm, the right framework, for a piece of documentation that must also be conceived as a film. What should be the criterion for choosing which pictures to show in what order? This is obviously the touchstone of all films on painting, since they have to introduce art sequences from singled-out still pictures. In this particular case, we find that Haesaerts has a marked critic's interest in demonstrating (very repetitiously) the artist's preoccupation with arranging his compositions in curves. Should, then, such a composition in one shot call for a similar one in the next? More generally, should the film director be concerned merely with sequence after sequence of formal pictorial association? This process renounces the idea of chronology to illustrate the artist's development—an essential starting-point of criticism. Inversely, to insist on chronology is to run the risk of countless repetitions in illustrating the com-



"Dramma di Christo," from Emmer's film of the Giotto frescoes.

mentary, of sacrificing beauty to history.

With *Rubens*, the scriptwriter has not made up his mind. That is why, in my opinion, his film lacks line, grace and efficiency. As a matter of fact, it might begin again at the end, in the middle, or anywhere else. Instead of this "Variations on Rubens" with its indigestible abundance, I should have preferred five or six short-length films treating separately, efficiently and intelligibly, each one of the themes with which the scriptwriter is here concerned.

To film portraits of past masters, I rather prefer as a rule—as far as rules can be set at all—film portraits of contemporaries. The first and more obvious merit of this formula is to ensure that future generations will know what a few indisputably great men were really like. It seems to me that France leads in this field, perhaps for the simple reason that she has recorded some artists of genius. It is moving to see Maillol at work with stone in his own Pyrenean country, or to watch, in slow motion, Matisse's brush wavering as his hand moves along the canvas. Indeed, I know of no film on art more satisfactory than that of Jean Lods, consecrated to Maillol, which has some excellent music and a simple, poetic commentary by Claude Roy. In the same category are films by the American J. J. Sweeney on the English sculptor Henry Moore: by Jean Tedesco, and then Jean Lods, on the tapestries of Jean Lurçat; by Thomas Bouchard on Fernand Léger; by Irving Hartley on Alexander Calder. Of all these, perhaps the film on Moore will last the longest, because of the importance of Moore himself—though in other respects it is poor.

The most straightforward of films on the fine arts are those concerned solely with popularisation. From a specialist's point of view they may be less fascinating, although it would be foolish to dismiss them altogether, and one encounters some

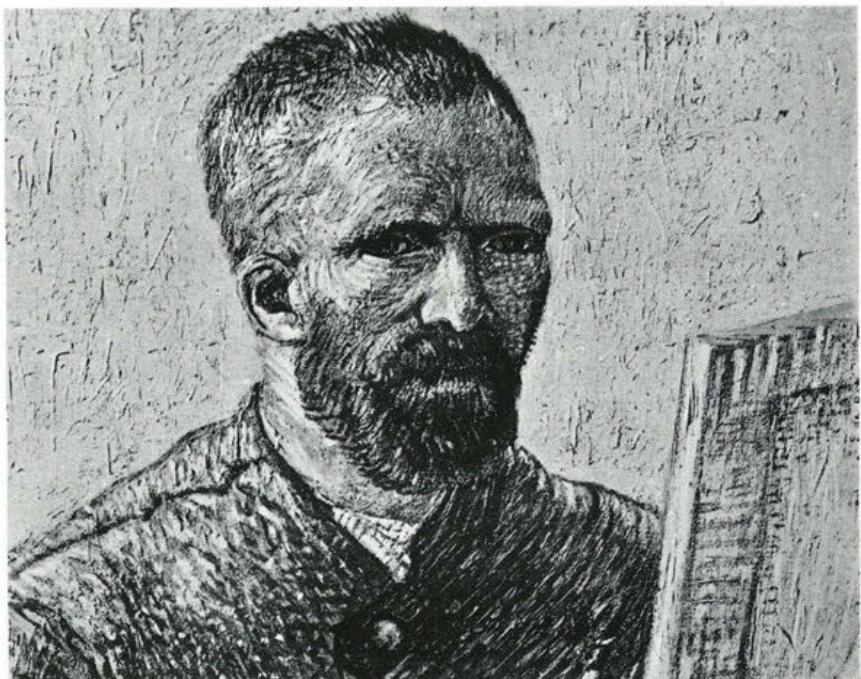
notable exceptions on the way. The Americans, through the Museum of Modern Art in New York, have made some such films: for example, Eliot O'Hara demonstrating the technique and theory of modern abstract painting (*An Abstraction with Planes*), and how he transmits the impression felt at the sight of a landscape into a water-colour (*Brush Techniques*). In other films, historical considerations are added to technical explanation (*Evolution of the Skyscraper*).

I wonder, as a French specialist on the English cinema, whether English films on fine arts are not somewhat underestimated, though their didactic and sociological outlook usually ensures educational value at the expense of technical or aesthetic film experiments. Most of these films, of course, have been made under the patronage of the Central Office of Information or the British Council. Admittedly, *Saint Paul's* and *Westminster Abbey* are no more than conventional trifles: but *Out of Chaos*, though ingenuous and slow in starting, is not without virtues: and films such as *Architects of England* and *Development of the English Town* have considerable practical value. By far the best of all, however, seems to me *The Beginning*

of History, which is the only attempt of its kind, implies an amazing amount of patient research, is neatly edited, well shot, and altogether in a class of its own.

What distinguishes the British outlook in this field, as in documentary generally, is the emphasis on education and society, which is not wholly explained by official patronage. It provides a likely explanation of the abnormal proportion—by European standards—of films on the more socially valuable of the fine arts: architecture.

At present, there is little to be gained from introducing rigid categories into a genre which is still searching for principles—provisionally, of course, since the cinema is always renewing itself without ever coming to a standstill. Progress, however, will be slow, if only for want of a



"Van Gogh."

satisfactory colour process. At the moment, Kodachrome is unique in reproducing colours faithfully, but it can only be used on 16 mm., and so most films on art have been made in black and white. One can understand why purists are irritated by, say, pictures of Van Gogh so "reproduced", so mutilated in this way. As to the quality of relief, an illusion of it is frequently obtained in films devoted to

sculptors: the play of light and shade, the possibilities of shooting from different angles, suggest that the film on art has a special future here. I can only add that almost everything remains to be invented pending the time when such a shapeless, ambitious affair as *Rubens* (however experimental it may appear to-day) will be considered unthinkable.



"Rubens." *Compositions in curves.*

(“Second Opinion” *continued from page 22*)

expressed. On balance I think the controlled wage-scale but greater artistic freedom offered by the Public Corporation gives more scope to the artist, as well as better service to the public, than a competitive commercial system.

One final instance suggests itself. While the production of books is not directly subsidised by the community, the buying and distribution of books by Public Libraries and Public Education Authorities makes a publicly subsidised contact between Author and Reader, with minimal interference by the state paid (or municipally paid) middleman-librarian.

Applied to film distribution this would involve publicly owned cinemas with great freedom of programme-choice allowed to individual managers. Such a system, I under-

stand, exists in Denmark. I cannot see that it places in the hands of cinema managers more power over public taste than is at present exercised by public librarians; and would give them less scope for tyranny than is now exercised by the comparatively few individuals who control film production and distribution under free enterprise.

To conclude: if the *Art of the Film* is left to depend upon the *Industry*, dependent upon being either a twinge in the *Industry's* conscience, or a camouflaged advertisement of the *Industry's* Prestige, it will continue to languish, and to be a morbid symptom in the Industrial Organism. A healthy *Industry* does not suffer from twinges of conscience; nor does it have any need to resolve an inferiority complex by vaunting its "Prestige".

BOOK REVIEWS

THEORY AND TECHNIQUE OF PLAYWRITING AND SCREENWRITING, by John Howard Lawson (Putnam, New York, 1949)

IN THIS SECOND EDITION of a book first published in 1936, the author has added a new section of some 150 pages (one third of the whole) on screenwriting. His analysis of the principles of dramatic construction, and their subsequent application to the film, make one of the soundest and most useful guides to film writing which has yet been published.

The chief value of Mr. Lawson's book lies in his awareness of the fundamental motives which compel a creative artist to express himself through the drama or the film. "There is a considerable literature", he says, "dealing with the technique of playwriting. It has comparatively slight value because it rests on the false assumption that the playwright builds his play in a social vacuum. The student struggles with rules concerning structure, dialogue, characterisation, rising action, falling action, climax. But the rules are abstractions unrelated either to the history of the theatre or to the drama of human events from which the playwright must necessarily draw his material".

In view of this, it does not greatly matter whether one is prepared to accept completely Mr. Lawson's technical analysis or the way in which he uses his technical terms ("progression" for example, or "the obligatory scene" or "climax"). Because he is dealing with fundamentals nearly everything that he says makes good sense and sets the mind working, and one can see what he is getting at without always necessarily agreeing with the way he describes it.

It might be thought that a book originally written for the playwright, and only subsequently extended to cover the film, would have a very strong theatrical bias, but Mr. Lawson is well aware of the fundamental differences between the two media. He mentions the significance of Sarah Bernhardt's *Queen Elizabeth* in "starting the theatricalization of the American film", using italics of disapproval. Later, in writing of the close-up, he refers to Laurence Olivier's difficulties in adapting *Hamlet*: "Although he endeavours to use the camera creatively, he lacks the technical equipment for the free development of a cinematic language. It is obvious that his experience has been primarily in the theatre and that he thinks theatrically. Throughout *Hamlet* we have stage images which arbitrarily begin to move or are seen from tricky angles—giving a cinematic impression which is not based upon the inner necessities and logic of the film form".

It is Lawson's thesis that all drama is a conflict involving the conscious will; to quote him more exactly: "the essential character of drama is social conflict—persons against other persons, or individuals against groups, or groups against other groups, or individuals or groups against social or national forces—in which the conscious will, exerted for the accomplishment of specific and understandable aims, is sufficiently strong to bring the conflict to a point of crisis". In dealing with the cinema he draws attention to the greater capacity of the film for portraying social forces and thus for giving extension to the arena of social conflict. "In the theatre", he says, "the social

framework is outside the scope of the stage presentation. But there is no such limitation imposed upon the screen play. There is nothing to prevent the camera and the microphone from roaming where they please. If they fail to explore everything that relates to the root-action, the movement is artificially restricted and the emotional drive of the characters is dissipated. . . . The logic of conflict-in-motion decrees that everything seen by the camera becomes an integral part of the action. The environment is not passive. It is a dramatic force".

While thus emphasising on the one hand the capacity of the cinema, by reason of its range and flexibility, for representing social forces, he points out on the other hand that through the use of the close-up it is capable of the highest degree of concentration on the individual—a degree of concentration which the theatre comes nearest to achieving in the soliloquy. It is in its command of all that lies between these two extremes, between the generalised life of the world at large and the particular life of the individual, which in Lawson's view gives the cinema its peculiar power.

If the novice screenwriter has any insight and native ability at all, he is likely to get far more from a provocative analysis of the nature of the medium, such as this, than from a superficial outline of rules for film construction.

ERNEST LINDGREN.

HISTOIRE D'UN ART: LE CINEMA DES ORIGINES A NOS JOURS, by Georges Sadoul

(Flammarion, 26, rue Racine, Paris)

Georges Sadoul has recently written a condensed version of his important work on the history of the cinema, of which two learned volumes have so far been brought out by another publisher (Editions Denoël). The first few chapters of the present book cover the same ground as these volumes—the invention of the cinema and its progress in several countries before 1909—and are little more than the simplest possible *résumé* of them. What follows is presumably an anticipation of future volumes. In the last chapters, bringing it up to the end of the recent war, Sadoul writes as a contemporary critic of developments which can hardly be described as history in the sense that the silent cinema, for example, is history.

I have called this a condensed history, rather than a popular one. The length (and the price) will appeal to people who want to know something of the subject but are not prepared to give it the time and energy that Sadoul's other books undoubtedly demand. But the style is as austere as ever. No one knows better than Sadoul the complexity and detail of this extremely wide subject, which spreads in so many directions—the structure and personalities of the industry, the content of films and their social significance, the development of film technique, its relation to the mechanical equipment available at any one time, and so on. Only a master of all this material can pick out the essential details for a summary and Sadoul, who is certainly a master of detail, is well qualified to do this. But the master becomes fond of his material and

hates to discard it. He becomes terse, packing as many facts as possible into his few chapters, rather than generalise or amputate too much of his material, and make light reading of what is left. Our master of film historians is no exception, and although his latest book is conveniently short he makes few concessions to the lazy reader.

It is a critic's history. There is, for example, no comprehensive picture of the commercial and social background of production; little attempt to re-create the atmosphere of the various periods; except for the pages dealing with the invention of cinematography, there are only occasional references to equipment; finally—and to me this seems most important—the evolution of directorial and editing technique is treated descriptively, rather than analytically. Significant instances of the use of such things as close-ups and camera movement are noted, and brilliant associations of ideas illuminate their meaning. But such points of technique are used to illustrate the work of individuals and justify a critic's judgment, rather than to discover a theory of the evolution of technique. Personally I feel this places too much stress on the creative share of the individual, and tends to obscure the fact that there was a logic of development quite apart from the personalities involved.

The book is, in fact, a retrospective use of film criticism as we know it to-day. The method is highly selective and stands or falls on the correctness of Sadoul's choice of material. For example, he does not describe the production of every period in each country, but picks out only those national "schools" which he considers significant at any one time. In the same way, commercial methods and the social background of the cinema are included only in so far as they seem important to his purpose. Fortunately, one of Sadoul's great qualities is his selective insight, a talent for the association of apparently unrelated facts which makes an intelligible pattern of the whole. The habit of mind, however, has its dangers, one of which is a tendency to make patterns at any price. To give an example, it is true that in Lumière's celebrated *Arrivée du Train* the object filmed, the advancing train, occupies successively each perspective of the screen (the equivalent of a long shot, a mid shot, and a close shot); nevertheless it is surely carrying things too far to see here the elements of either a sort of travelling shot in inverse, or of modern cutting. Sadoul is extraordinarily painstaking and accurate in the compilation of data. But his field is large and where his data are insufficient it would surely be better, even if less interesting, to leave loose ends than to force them into a pattern to which they do not belong. To take a case in point from the section which most concerns us, the early British film, on what grounds does he suggest that G. A. Smith's technique was "influenced" by Friese-Greene? Was it simply that they both lived at Brighton? Friese-Greene neither engaged in, nor wrote about, commercial film production; thus presumably the only way he could influence Smith was by personal contact, yet Smith has told me that he did not know Friese-Greene at the time.

Retrospective criticism is a dangerous thing, but Sadoul has obviously looked at many of the well-known film classics again very carefully and his appraisal is interesting. Here, however, he is on sure ground but not new ground. A number of world cinema histories have been published and although they differ in national bias and in critical

quality, all of them, after all, deal with the same old facts. When Sadoul condenses his work to this extent he must necessarily deal largely with the same uncontroversial milestones of development as everybody else. His great achievement in the other books has been to go deeper than this, and he is at his best dealing in great and fascinating detail with the more obscure parts of the subject. To anyone at all interested in the history of the cinema this is a less enjoyable book to read, as I suspect it has been less enjoyable to write, than his longer works. One of the most valuable things it could do would be to tempt people to read the latter.

RACHAEL LOW.

NICE WORK, by Adrian Brunel (*Forbes Robertson, 12/6*)

Adrian Brunel's account of thirty years in British films gives the popular view of the industry. It is the simple old story of the Wardour Street villains, imbecilic in all but their immense wealth, set on ruining the artists. Mr. Brunel, of course, is on the side of the angels, but is too anxious to think well of everybody to score real hits even on this easy target. His story is depressing and conventional, the apologia of that unfortunate figure, the man who nearly succeeded.

He went into films in the happy days when, if you wanted a 4,000 foot film, you bought 4,000 feet of stock, and allowed neither for cutting or for retakes. Most of his book is devoted to those days, and to his career as a silent director culminating in screen versions of *The Vortex* and *The Constant Nymph*. The thirties, after his destruction by sound, were a dreary grind of quickie direction, the last resting place of the defeated. Mr. Brunel, however, is resilient, and although he records his failures honestly, in his last chapter he writes grandly but cryptically of magnificent future plans. He finds his own failure hard to explain, and it is never easy to see why, in a world so governed by mediocrities, a talent neither greater nor less than those at the top should be ruthlessly driven to the bottom. Perhaps Mr. Brunel is both too much and too little of an artist. His standards are commercial (as he proved in *Film Script*, a mine of misinformation on how to write for the screen), but he is conscious of higher things. He admired the great Russian films, shown at the subversive Film Society of which he was an early member, and he stood up for the importance of the editor when sound seemed to destroy the silent principles. Ill luck haunts those who are just too good, and not quite good enough, and Mr. Brunel's history might make depressing reading. His book, however, is bright, superficial, too reminiscent, down to the travel talk and long forgotten gossip of Noel Coward's *Present Indicative*, to be more than another melancholy picture of the destruction of the dead and derelict hopes of the twenties.

PENELOPE HOUSTON.

We have received the following publications:—

ALLEN, John. *Going to the Theatre*. (Phoenix House.) 7s. 6d.
INFORMATIONAL FILM AND TELEVISION YEAR BOOK 1949-50. (Edinburgh, Albyn Press.) 12s. 6d.
SUSSMAN, Aaron. *Amateur Photographer's Handbook*. (Pitman.) 20s.
British Standards: *Photographic Lenses, Sound-on-Film Release Prints, Film Spools for 2,000 ft. 35 mm. Release Prints, Lenses for 35 mm. Cinematograph Projectors*.

ECONOMICS: *Supplements*

WHERE ARE THE DOLLARS ?—2

Richard Griffith

It was clear from these two experiences that Mr. Rank's big films could not achieve sufficient bookings in this country to justify the costs which mass distribution entails. Which brings us to *Henry V*. Sir Laurence Olivier's film had been in the U.S. for two years before it was shown to the public. No one quite knew what to do with it. It owes its salvation, paradoxically enough, to three veteran show-men whose thinking habits have always been geared to the idea of mass-distribution. Walter Wanger, Spyros Skouras of 20th Century-Fox, and Nate J. Blumberg of Universal-International saw the film individually, and all told Rank, in the words of one of them: "You will have a complete flop if you don't realise that you have a gem; you must road-show this film at top prices". So it came about that the Olivier production opened at a small house in New York under the banner: "The Theatre Guild presents *Henry V*". This legend signalled the decision to ignore mass-appeal in favour of cultivating the small "sure" audience of playgoers who could be counted on to want to see Shakespeare on the screen. The rest is history. *Henry* ran 34 weeks at the John Golden Theatre (a legitimate house) and, concurrently, for 11 weeks at the large Civic Centre, which it vacated only because the theatre had prior commitments for the rest of the season.

The pattern should now have been plain, although most of us, and I have to include myself, had yet to fathom its significance. Actually, only a few thousand people saw *Henry V* in any given week of its run. Had the film opened at any of the large Broadway houses, the vast overhead entailed would have forced its closing after a run of one or, at the most, two weeks. But small theatres, with relatively high admission prices and relatively low operating costs, could keep it going indefinitely, holding it through temporary box-office slumps until its reputation had spread. Before it ended its run here, *Henry V* had become a New York institution. Its success was repeated throughout the country, wherever it was shown in small houses, at high prices, and for long runs. Even so, virtually everyone failed to draw the correct inferences. We believed that *Henry* was a special case which didn't prove anything, this in spite of the fact that *Brief Encounter* was already duplicating its record on a more modest scale. Perhaps the Rank organization could not credit the evidence either, for with their next important film, *Great Expectations*, they turned their backs on the example of *Henry* and made another strenuous and inevitably disappointing attempt to capture the big market. *Great Expectations* was released through Universal-International in the usual manner. It opened to a remarkable press and ran five weeks at the huge Radio City Music Hall, a feat equalled by no other British film since *The Private Life of Henry VIII*. Its fate in the country at large was another story. Although liked by all who saw it, and made famous by excellent reviews in the mass magazines, it achieved adequate box office only in those situations where it played long runs in small

houses. In the big chains where it played on double bills, attendance was poor; its stars, its title, even its author, meant nothing to the faceless millions who take their movie pabulum from Louella O. Parsons and Hedda Hopper. It is said to have grossed a million dollars in this country, but I should be very much surprised if its net, after the subtraction of distribution costs, was comparable to that of *Henry V*.

Oppose to this spotty record the achievement of *Hamlet*. About the time it was having its first private screening in New York, I found myself discussing it with Terry Ramsaye, the noted film historian and editor emeritus of the leading trade publication, *Motion Picture Herald*. Mr. Ramsaye does not make a habit of guessing wrong. But he agreed completely with my own feeling that *Hamlet* had no chance except with minority audiences in the upper income brackets, and so stated in an editorial read by every exhibitor in America. Seemingly in accordance with this belief, the picture opened at a small theatre on Park Avenue, again under the "auspices" of Theatre Guild. Across the country it was road-shown at high prices in small theatres. But, a very short time after its national release, I happened to be checking the results of a monthly survey of public opinion on motion pictures which the National Board of Review conducts. To my astonishment, *Hamlet* had jumped into first place as favourite film of the month, not just in New York but in virtually every part of the country reached by our poll. Nor were its fans confined to college professors and their students. They were drawn from every section of the community. *Hamlet* had burst the bounds of the minority market and become a mass attraction. At this writing, the trade press report that it has earned more than 1,500,000 dollars in the United States, and has "barely scratched the surface" of its potential market.

Hamlet started out modestly and turned into a bonanza. *Great Expectations*, thrust into the big-time distribution hopper, netted far less than its earning potential, in a large part because of the heavy costs of mass distribution. The conclusion is obvious, and if further evidence is needed, it is amply furnished by the experiences of 20th Century-Fox with the productions of Sir Alexander Korda. Korda's contract provides that his films be given equal handling with Fox's own productions—and I know of my own knowledge that special efforts are made for them, because they are thought to require it. The results speak for themselves. The vast Roxy Theatre is Fox's Broadway showcase for its more important productions. *An Ideal Husband* and *Anna Karenina* ran one week each in this playhouse whose patronage usually supports a four-week run. Again, 20th Century-Fox controls several chains of theatres across the country—an improvement over Korda's old arrangement with theatre-less United Artists. In spite of this head start, *An Ideal Husband* has to date secured only 5,000 bookings in the United States, while *Anna*

Karenina has achieved less than three thousand. Both pictures have been in release for more than a year. It should be borne in mind that a high-budget feature, into which class both Korda films fall, normally plays 10,000 theatres in this country. It should also be remembered that distribution costs for a picture securing only 5,000 bookings are nearly as great as those incurred for 10,000. As for *Mine Own Executioner*, in a period of more than eight months it has secured less than a thousand bookings, and the Fox authorities have little hope that it will materially improve this sorry record. In spite of "name" stars and lavish production values, the Korda films have been unable to secure an adequate share of the mass market at which they are aimed.

The point of contrast is provided this time by the activities of Prestige Pictures, the catch-all unit set up by Universal to distribute those of Rank's films which, it was believed, could be shown successfully only in scattered small houses. The methods and approach of this subsidiary agency are signalised by the deliberate adoption of a name which was practically an affront to money-minded distributors and exhibitors. In Hollywood argot, a "prestige" picture is one whose merits may reflect glory on its producers, but which cannot possibly make money. The Rank organisation's choice of this title indicates its own opinion of the box office potential of the films relegated to Prestige, an opinion undoubtedly shared by the experienced film salesmen brought in from the road to staff the new company. Lacking star names and all the rest of the familiar exploitation values, it seemed that these films could not hope to be presented on Broadway, that their only conceivable outlet lay in the "art" theatres in New York and elsewhere which customarily played French films and other exotica. Late in 1945, the authoritative Herman G. Weinberg listed the number of these theatres in the United States as eighteen. It looked as though it might be hard to extract even prestige from Prestige Pictures.

Then a miracle happened. Prestige had in its vaults the Wendy Hiller film, *I Know Where I'm Going*, which had failed to achieve a Broadway opening and which not even the "art" houses would touch. The Sutton, a small theatre (561 seats) which had previously refused to play the film, suddenly was forced to book it because of the last-minute cancellation of a scheduled attraction. The house was customarily devoted to second-run films, none of which played for more than a few days. *I Know Where I'm Going* ran nearly a year. Just what manner of spell it cast upon the huge number of New Yorkers who came to see it no one is really sure, though many theories have been advanced. What is important is that, because it played a small house with moderate overhead, it had ample time to roll up its large earnings. Hard to publicise, it had to depend on word-of-mouth endorsement, which spreads slowly. That it did spread there can be no doubt. Its audience was not confined to the Manhattan intelligentsia; it drew patrons from the remotest sections of Queens and the Bronx, and even from towns in New Jersey and Connecticut. And those who saw it not only told their friends but went back a second time themselves.

The unexpected success of *I Know Where I'm Going* crystallised the pattern set by the more conspicuous examples of *Henry V* and *Hamlet*. Eagle-Lion acknowledges that it was the source of their distribution plan for *Red*

Shoes, which is being road-shown in small houses on a reserved seat basis. In its second year in New York, *Red Shoes* has already played 200 long-run bookings over the country, of which 14 are repeat runs and, like *Hamlet*, has hardly begun to tap the audience which is awaiting it. It has achieved this notable preliminary record with only 60 Technicolor prints at a cost of 30,000 dollars—less than one-sixth of the print cost charged against *Caesar and Cleopatra*. A similar example is Sidney Box's *Quartet*, which had a 32-week run at the Sutton Theatre, now a first-run house and a mecca for discriminating audiences because of the success of British films shown there. Although Eagle-Lion will release *Quartet* on a "grind" (or regular) basis, this film too will seek out the smaller houses and there can be little doubt, in view of its *réclame* in New York, that its eventual box-office record will honourably stand comparison with that of *Red Shoes*.

Meanwhile, Prestige has pursued its small-house, low-overhead policy with minor films of far less intrinsic drawing power than the two just discussed. With print and advertising costs confined to a minimum, the company has done well with those films which were relatively inexpensively produced to begin with. And it has made discoveries of the greatest interest. All over the country as well as in New York, films of the calibre of *Brief Encounter*, *I Know Where I'm Going* and *Tawny Pipit* have drawn patrons from every section of the community and from every income group. This was a genuine surprise. It had been believed by both critics and distributors that the intellectuals constituted the only possible audience for minor British films. But the managers of the art houses which played these pictures discovered that their patrons were comprised of business men, housewives, union leaders, charwomen, politicians, in short, a cross-section of the public very like that which streams into the huge cathedrals of the motion-picture. It is largely composed of adults.

It is surely known in Britain that the Gallup poll, the Roper poll, and the Audience Research Institution have established that, for most Americans, the period of intense movie-going falls between the ages of 15 to 25. It is now accepted that men and women over 35, 40 per cent. of the potential audience, have been lost to films. The reasons for this are probably obvious; they stem from that cultivation of the "undifferentiated audience" which has been Hollywood's calculated policy for thirty years. The experience of Prestige Pictures is making it equally obvious that those British films which deal with mature themes have the power to attract adult audiences in the United States and are slowly drawing them back to the movie theatres. Moreover, I have it on the authority of Mr. L. J. McGinley, of Prestige, that these adults are gradually bringing their young people with them. What is actually happening is that the audience which is being created for British pictures here is drawn from non-moviegoers. It is a new audience, one which Hollywood has ignored for years. That the American industry is now acutely aware of this is evident from the controversies in trade circles over the question of making more adult films. The point is that while Hollywood wavers, British films are recreating the movie-going habit among people who previously could not be lured into the theatre by the most skilful drum-beating.

Amateur Activities: *MOUNT PLEASANT PRODUCTIONS*

Alan Cooke

Black Legend is the most ambitious amateur film to have been made for some time: its directors, Alan Cooke and John Schlesinger, are now completing *The Starfish*, filmed on location in Cornwall. Alan Cooke believes that the amateur can play an important part in the film industry and suggests a line of possible development in the future.



Kenneth Griffith in "The Starfish," the new film by Alan Cooke and John Schlesinger.

MOUNT PLEASANT is the name of a Queen Anne farm house in the South of Berkshire, where nearly eighteen months ago John Schlesinger first suggested we should make a film together. He believed it could be done and Mount Pleasant Productions undoubtedly owes its beginning to him. In explaining our difficulties and the measure of our success to Film Societies we have felt it important to emphasise that we have started from scratch. There was not a technician amongst us; nor at that time had any of us had more than a fleeting glimpse of a film studio. What we knew we had learned from our stalls in cinema after cinema. Yet we wanted to make, without advice or assistance, a film to run an hour which might excite and amuse a critical audience. There is, of course, no short cut to the making of first class films; yet in spite of the frequent ineptitudes of *Black Legend*, we think we proved a valuable point for amateur film groups: that a film can be made in a fortnight on a budget of £250 or less. Its existence at least shows that the enthusiasm of a group can overcome the greatest obstacles. From the outset we realised that we were faced by many difficulties. In *Black Legend* we intended to make people laugh, and occasionally we hoped to thrill them. Deeper emotions we decided not to attempt, because it was unlikely that our actors would be able to convey them convincingly, without the aid of dialogue, to an

audience accustomed to polished professional acting.

On this point we argued long, and came to an important decision. The film had, for financial reasons, to be silent, though we envisaged a musical accompaniment on discs, and a brief commentary where the plot needed it. But although silent in fact, the style of the film would certainly be shaped by the camera technique of the last twenty years—a “talkie” technique. If we reverted, for example, to the ham acting of *The Great Train Robbery* the effect would be hilarious but unconvincing. On the other hand, the subtlety of expression in close-ups might be meaningless without dialogue. Nevertheless, we agreed that this was a necessary risk and while the outline of our character drawing was often blurred, we did show that a story can be told in that way.

The organisation of *Black Legend* proved an immense task. Weighed down by our ignorance, by our terror of forgetting important points, and the persistent doubt whether all our efforts would ever result in an actual film, we struggled through schedules, call sheets and property lists for months. The strain upon everybody's patience during actual shooting is fearful to recall, and our margin of inefficiency wasted untold energy. We lost equipment, we spoiled a haystack that was entered for a competition, and one idea for an effect in the hanging scene wrecked the



Cooke and Schlesinger on location in Cornwall for "The Starfish."

camera, which had to be rushed up to London with the loss of a day of sunshine; yet we finished it, and by spending the following term in editing, we had the completed film ready for showing in January. There are so many versions of the Legend of Coombe Gibbet that we cannot be certain how far we have falsified history. When, encouraged by the film's success in Newbury, we showed the film in Oxford, the *Times* correspondent assured us that the gig driven by our murderer was a hundred years before its time. Later the lady in question sends a letter to ask our hero to come and thatch her cottage. Would a seventeenth century thatcher, we were asked, be able to read? These and other sins are undeniable.

Several critics expressed their interest in *Black Legend*. As they were unable to see it in Oxford or Newbury, we managed to arrange a London showing. This fortunately served to increase interest in the film, and we were invited by the British Film Institute to show it at the viewing session of the Federation of Film Societies. We found that we were able to pay back the generous and brave supporters who had put up our initial capital. Everybody began to ask us what we planned to do next. We had one or two ideas. For instance, we were anxious to make a film about the sea, and we wanted to set it in the present-day, if only to remove the endless complications of trying to avoid telegraph wires and metalled roads in our camera angles. At Easter we explored the Cornish coast, and on our last evening, we came upon Cadgwith.

All we saw in Cadgwith that first evening was an unspoilt fishing village whose inhabitants seemed far more co-operative than any Cornishmen we had encountered. Our good fortune was astonishing, for I cannot believe we would have completed *The Starfish* anywhere else.

During the summer we argued without much progress as to what form the film should take. The Oxford vacation was already upon us and we had made no decision. We wanted a witch in it; and we wanted to use young Nigel Finzi, whose performance in *Black Legend* seemed to us outstanding. Finally, we spent ten days in Cadgwith and wrote a script along lines inherited from the Brothers Grimm. The result is a "fairy-tale in a modern setting" for which we felt both dialogue and a specially written musical score would be needed. This, in its turn involved a soundtrack, which meant extra expense.

The story tells how a young fisherman catches in his net the legendary Seawitch who haunts a cove near his village. He strikes a bargain with her, that in return for her freedom, she will let him fish in her cove where he will be assured of large catches. He takes from her a magic charm—the Starfish—to ensure that she keeps her word. He is now feared by the superstitious villagers who think him to be in league with the witch, and only regains their friendship when he rescues a young boy whom the Seawitch has trapped, and with the aid of the Starfish charm, breaks the evil spell she has cast over him.

In the making of this film there were many problems. Tide as well as sun had to be allowed for, and if it took longer than we had expected to film a scene in a boat, while our actors struggled in a heavy sea, near dangerous rocks, then we could not retake for ten days, when tide and sun would again be suitable. Never again will we make a film in a hurry. This time we shot 8,000 ft. without seeing more than the first few reels of rushes. But if we had difficulties above and beyond anything in *Black Legend* we had help, too. Two members of the Farnborough Film Society gave up their annual holiday to give us the benefit of their technical experience, while our editor, A. E. Cox, who was working strenuously on a professional film at the time, gave up forty-eight precious hours to drive down and advise us. And Kenneth Griffith, whose performances in *The Shop at Sly Corner*, *Bond Street* and *Blue Scar* have been unvaryingly praised by the critics, joined us to play the fisherman who strikes a bargain with the Seawitch.

From these two films, *Black Legend* and *The Starfish* we have learned a valuable lesson. We know that a worthwhile film can be made on a natural location with only a very small capital. We need only a small group of technicians to make such films commercially possible in England—films which would hold an audience. We believe that someday, soon, a producer will venture a few thousand pounds to put such a project on a proper basis. After all, at the worst it could be sent the rounds as a supporting feature. How can he lose? This, surely, would be the answer to Edward Dmytryk's recent criticism of the closed *entrée* to British pictures for beginners, and give those of us who wish to learn to make films "the opportunity to learn their trade without the pressure of having to make good on their first picture".

Every young director or cameraman realises that enthusiasm is not enough, that he has an unconscionable amount to learn. But we want to be given the chance to learn, not to be thrust into the cutting-room for too long. Nor will our producers and film financiers be wise to shake their heads and say it just can't be done. We do not claim to have produced a commercially possible picture yet; but Mount Pleasant Productions have convinced many of us that with very little encouragement a worthwhile experiment could become a reality.

DOCUMENTARY

ONE FOR THE ROAD

Philip Mackie



"Come Saturday," a new British documentary about the pleasures of Saturday afternoons.

British documentary, it has become sadly apparent, is not what it was. Off to a flying start in the 30's, with Cavalcanti, Grierson, Basil Wright and others at the G.P.O. Film Unit, the dispersal of talent—some directors have migrated to features, others have become executives—has now grounded it. As well as the lack of a new movement, this may in part be due to the shifting position of the Sponsor, always a key-factor in documentary. A sponsored film is one backed not by a film company (which supplies the facilities and technicians for making it), but by an outside organisation, which may range from a government department to an industrial firm. Most of the leading British documentaries in the 30's were sponsored directly by the G.P.O., which set up a film unit to make them: in the bureaucratic present, a middle-man has arisen—mainly in the form of the Central Office of Information, which negotiates between sponsor and film-maker. If the Ministry of Food wishes to sponsor a film, the C.O.I. acts as executive and contracts either its own unit, Crown, or an outside one, to make it.

Here, a fugitive from British documentary gives some random impressions of this field of production.

THE ONLOOKER SEES most of the game, but then the football sees a good deal of it too. After nearly four years at the Central Office of Information, largely spent being kicked around the field and sometimes moving towards a goal, perhaps I may throw out a few stray thoughts about sponsored film-making, and what is usually called "Documentary To-day".

Panning the Sponsor. This is a favourite game, which may be played with pencil and paper, or verbally whenever two or three film-makers are gathered together. The climax of the game is reached when all the players lean forward simultaneously and bite the hand that feeds them (or does not feed them: either variation is permissible). It is a game I have had a good deal of fun out of myself, but it is ultimately unrewarding: the sponsor simply won't join in, but sits silent and unconcerned on his money-bags.

Documentary To-day. "Sequence" once printed an article with this title. The first sentence filled me with hope: "Nobody who has worked in a Documentary film unit during the past twelve months can have emerged from the year's work with a feeling of confidence and satisfaction that all's well with Documentary". I read on eagerly,

expecting some shrewd thrusts of self-criticism. But no: it was just Panning the Sponsor all over again.

"Documentary". Once upon a time I won a small prize for defining "documentary", and for the benefit of those who don't already know, I now give an abbreviated version of my definition: documentary films are sponsored films, except the ones that end up by advertising Drene or the Co-op. A closer definition may once have been possible, but now only if one section of the short film industry is granted exclusive rights in the word.

The Function of the Sponsor. This is two-fold: to provide the money for making the film, and to take the blame if the film does not turn out well. Some sponsors arrogate to themselves an additional function, to interfere unwarrantably in the making of the film; but a determined film-maker normally gets his own way, for better or for worse. And on the whole, sponsors, though an undemonstrative race, are easily pleased.

Informational Purpose. Film-makers are responsible beings, which probably accounts for the set frown worn by so many of their films. I have been present on several occasions when the sponsor pleaded for a little more humour, a

little irrelevance, a flight of fancy; but the film-maker condemned such frivolities to death by uttering the awful words, "informational purpose".

X Hundred Reels a Year. It has been argued that, given proper backing and an assurance of distribution, the short film industry could fill the supporting programmes in British cinemas by producing X hundred reels of film a year. Indeed, the producer of short films has had a raw deal from the cinemas, and the present situation is extremely unsatisfactory; but I cannot believe that an expansion of production would mean much else than an increase in the number of second- and third-rate films. There have been some good talents lying idle for a time, but in general there are more films to be made than there are first-rate talents to make them. The situation in short films is aggravated by the habit good directors have had of migrating to the feature world, and by the habit the trade union has of objecting to the recruitment of talents from outside the film industry.

Criticism and Self-criticism. Public criticism is salutary even though the *Quarterly* did kill John Keats. Lack of public criticism engenders lack of self-criticism. Lack of both engenders vanity, complacency and parochialism. The short film industry does not all or always suffer from these diseases, but it is constantly exposed to the viruses.

Full Marks. Lest I should be thought to dislike short films, which is not true, let me quickly set down something in their praise: particularly the serious, factual, expository films—films like *Apples from your Garden*, *The Story of Printing*, *England's Wealth from Wool*, *Polio-Diagnosis and Management*, *Water for Fire-fighting*, *Grading and Packing Vegetables*, *Liver Fluke in Sheep*. These films, and others like them, could not be better done. They are clear, intelligent, and technically irreproachable. They are informed by enthusiasm for the subject, and (most important) by a sympathy with the audience, for with such specialised subjects it can be fairly assumed that the audience is already interested to the point of enthusiasm.

White Marks, Grey Marks, Black Marks. The maker of a film on liver fluke has much in common with the sheep-farmer who will see his film. The film-maker is at his ease with a small and clearly definable audience: for instance the makers of that admirable series, the "Your Children", films, have come to know and understand and love the audience they are serving. But when the subject is "general informational", and the audience is all mankind from China to Peru, then the producer is in a fix. There are several well-known ways for him to get out of the fix. He can make the film to please himself and nobody else, and take the chance that it pleases nobody else. He can carve off a small corner of the general public and aim at that, satisfied if he wins the approbation of the sociologists or the Film Societies. He can use a recipe from his own experience or a second-hand cookery book: let's jazz it up, lots of trick effects, make 'em jump out of their seats; let's have love, a pretty girl, a funny man, imitation poetry! There is a failure somewhere between the screen and the front row of the stalls. The film-maker lacks the instinctive sympathy with the general public which alone can make the contact.

People and Ideas. There are two ways of dividing up people: there is the Marx Brothers test, and there is the division into people who are interested in ideas and people who are interested in people. Except for a very few

directors and a handful of films—I instance *Five Towns*, *Thee and Me*, *Pool of Contentment*, *Come Saturday*—documentary film-makers belong to the ideas group. People to them are objects of pity, or statistics to prove a point, or foreground objects in a pictorial composition. They may feel, and feel strongly, for "the people"; they rarely feel with them. But most of the rest of mankind is primarily interested in people. It must be difficult for them to accept the stiff and priggish puppets that so often inhabit the documentary screen.

The End of a Myth. It seems to me that in the past the documentary movement drew and renewed its strength from a succession of ideas. "Documentary" itself was a sufficiently exciting idea to start off with; then the social purposes, the campaigning for social progress; then the war and the war-effort; then the idea of planning a better post-war Britain. But now the war is over, the planners are all around us; the documentary myth no longer has the power to nourish and sustain. The ideas now hotly propagated or confuted are, in the main, political; and the film sponsor, rightly or wrongly but necessarily, has taken a pretty wide detour round politics. The film-maker no longer has the pleasantly important feeling of being in the vanguard of something or other.

Opportunity Knocks. It is a common complaint that the post-war sponsor has failed to provide inspiring ideas and exciting opportunities, but in general there have been good opportunities to make three kinds of film. The technical and instructional films have been done admirably well. "Reportage" films have been made carefully and conscientiously, but with an almost total lack of the essential journalistic flair for the striking image and the telling phrase (I exempt from this the recent "World In Action" series). Films about people have too often been stiff and angular, or superficial, trite and insensitive.

The Importance of Being Earnest. Yes, life is real, life is earnest. But after a surfeit of sponsored films one turns gratefully to fiction or to life for a little wit, a little grace, a little liveliness—the clever satire of *They Gave Him The Works*, the sustained irony of *Worth The Risk?*, the jazz gaiety of *Chasin' The Blues*, the gracefulness of *La Famille Martin*, the bright ideas in the Charley cartoons, the comic spirit of Massingham's work.

Middle-aged Spread. The old G.P.O. films, and others made before the war, had, for all their faults, a good deal of freshness and sparkle, an engagingly youthful air. Nowadays, the flabby muscle and the middle-aged spread are only too common. Perhaps it is the disease of the age, the post-war malaise. But it is sad to see maidenheads lost and the arts of love still unlearnt.

One More for the Road. Blame it on the sponsor, blame it on the system, blame it on the age: all must bear some of the blame. But the real fault lies not in these but in the fact that film-makers do not devote sufficient time and study to the evening newspapers. People are perpetually being born and marrying and dying often in the unlikeliest places, and not only that, they steal, swindle, starve, adulter, murder, save lives, emigrate, get drunk, bet on horses, beat their wives, fall in love and elope, travel hundreds of miles to see a football match, and sail round the world in small boats. This is only part of the truth, of course; but so is "documentary" on a part, and the whole is considerably and increasingly greater than the part, and the part should know it.

FILM SOCIETIES : *The Other Side*

The successful growth of the Film Society Movement is common knowledge, and the subject of frequent congratulations. How much is owed to the enthusiasm and persistence of a number of individuals all over the country is less frequently remarked; the following account, by a Film Society secretary who prefers to remain anonymous, gives some idea of the other side of the picture.

OUR FILM SOCIETY began through a chance meeting over the shop counter of a shoe-repairer three years ago. Above the noise of machinery coming from the workroom, the shop-keeper and I could hear the wireless; but neither of us could name the composer of the music being played. The "Radio Times" being lost, I had to leave the shop without satisfying my curiosity. I was not worried by my lack of knowledge as I am no music student, but it was different with the shoe-mender, for later that afternoon my telephone rang, and I was very surprised to hear his voice. He told me the name that had eluded us earlier and I had to confess that I had forgotten the episode completely. I admitted that my chief interest was films and not music. We regretted the fact that our town had no specialised cinema and I mentioned that I had previously been secretary to a film society in a neighbouring city. This remark led to the fatal question: "Why not start a Film Society here?"

Once the question was asked there was no denying the challenge it presented. The shoe-mender, who has since become a friend of mine, proved to be enthusiastic in support of any widening of the cultural interests of the town, and he knew many people who would help. We formed a provisional committee of twenty people, seven of whom have proved to be really keen and are still active members of our executive committee.

We got much help in those early days from both local authorities and the C.O.I. in our area. Also, by a stroke of good fortune, the City Art Gallery was about to show an exhibition sponsored by the Arts Council on *The Art of the Film*. We decided to run three 16 mm. documentary programmes and to test the possible response of the public to a Film Society by the attendance at these meetings. I personally felt that there *must* be people who were exasperated and frustrated, as I was, by the limitations of purely commercial cinema in our town; for it is from the personal frustrations and exasperations of enthusiasts, like myself, that all such movements grow in the provinces.

At the end of these three shows the response, though not overwhelming, had been sufficient for us to consider the actual formation of a film society. Then the question arose: what form should the future activities of our proposed society take? We discussed the possibility of using 35 mm. and operating on Sunday, but we gave up these dreams and decided to establish ourselves firmly with 16 mm. feature selections, and with this solid foundation beneath us, then to extend our structure to include 35 mm. feature programmes. At that time we were unaware that this rarely happens. 35 mm. societies often extend their activities to include a 16 mm. section profitably, but it is much more difficult to alter the shape of your society by a radical change to 35 mm. Sunday showings: I should be interested to hear of any society which has actually graduated to 35 mm. from 16 mm.* In the light of our present

experience I doubt if we should have adopted the 16 mm. substandard films so easily. We certainly did not realise the tremendous differences both in the technical condition and audience appeal that lie between the two types of film shows.

Firstly, there is the continual disappointment, when using copies reduced from 35 mm. to 16 mm., of the sound-track, which is often blurred and inaudible. But the greatest drawback lies in the fact that all the potential enthusiasts, whose support is vital to the finances of any society, have to overcome the lack of accustomed "Film Magic" which is the common experience of commercial filmgoing. They have to overcome the hardness of the seats; the continual distracting drone of the projector in the room; the annoyance of film breaks, which do not occur in the welcome privacy of a projection box; a much smaller image than usual. At least 20 per cent. of the new members each year are not willing to put up with these unavoidable conditions and do not re-join, even though, as we gain in experience, our shows run more smoothly than before.

These facts have emerged over the past three years. At the beginning of our first season we only realised that we were taking a gamble in booking a six months' programme. During the past two seasons the membership has increased to 194. We are trying to keep our subscription as low as possible, so that it is not beyond the pocket of anyone. Last winter, as a gesture to the cultural activity of the city, we gave a performance in the cathedral at which we showed *Instruments of the Orchestra*, *Hungry Minds* and *The Last Chance*. All the youth clubs in the city were invited to the Christmas comedy programme at a reduced guest ticket price; we got a strong response to this, and particularly to *Fiddle-Dee-Dee*, which was given a long round of applause.

We have tried to establish a true film society—not a clique of film snobs, nor a group of passive people wishing to do no more than see a film and then to go home to forget all about it, its pleasures, disappointments and the many problems both critical and social, which cinema should raise in the minds of those who consider it more than a habit. But as yet these pretensions are still in the nature of a gamble. Perhaps our subscription is too low; perhaps our town is too apathetic; perhaps the choice of films could have been better; perhaps our publicity has been uninspired; perhaps. . . .

It seems to be a difficult task, in our town of sixty thousand inhabitants, to increase our membership beyond 200. Although the loyalty and interest of the faithful fifty is there, it is an uphill and often disheartening struggle to put a 16 mm. society on to a firm financial footing. Nevertheless, I still believe it can be done. We few film fanatics still dream of being a group at least 300 strong—all these with rapacious cinema appetites clamouring to be satisfied by selecting, seeing and discussing films.

* Four societies have actually done this.—Editor.

TELEVISION NOTES

Michael Clarke

TODAY, three years and more after the re-opening of the B.B.C.'s Television Service, 171,000 licences have been issued, and there are an estimated four viewers to every set. Although it still affects only a fraction of the population, it is clear that television is already a factor in our culture, and its future influence and importance cannot be denied.

In these circumstances, it seems important to attempt an analysis, however brief, of the role and capacities of the medium. It is true that at Alexandra Palace constant controversy and debate goes on about style, technique and function; but little of this has so far reached the public. Only now is a systematic means of sampling the taste, opinions and reactions of viewers being started; and so far the owner of a television set invariably has programmes thrust upon him whose nature and balance reflect the rudimentary development of the medium, and the perpetual, essential experiments in form and method.

Now there are innumerable unresolved issues in this field which demand and need extended discussion; it is to be hoped that they will receive it. A mass medium so powerful in its range, in describing and dramatising the everyday world we take so much for granted, requires a critical response in the public. In these notes one can touch only the fringe of a vast subject, and it is proposed chiefly to raise issues which can stimulate comment and criticism from others. After attempting a brief definition of television, I propose to touch on those aspects of it which relate to film, and to discuss the question of television's "actuality", which is rightly claimed to give it unequalled power; and to show how this word must be examined and understood, if it is not to become a dangerous catchword.

Let no one think that it is too early to attempt theoretical work in this field; the practical work is being done daily in the B.B.C. and, consciously or not, practice creates theoretical precedent. We have the case of the cinema before our eyes; here public interest in novelty tended for years to blunt the critical sense, so that style, subject and treatment were accepted by millions before they had ever been seriously described. Although the issues raised here seem simple at first sight, in fact the problems of television are highly complex; and at this stage one can do little more than approach tentative conclusions, temporary resting-points in the long journey of analysis and argument.

Television is basically a means of transmitting, to a theoretically infinite number of recipients, moving images enclosed in a roughly rectangular frame, with or without

their natural sound. It is thus a means of communication, and as such has broad functions. But it has the special resource of being able to transmit the camera's view of events virtually at the moment they occur.

Now the social value of television chiefly exists because of its broad resources. Able to reach millions of people, it can bring them not only the obvious topical or sporting events, but informational material, plays and entertainment programmes of all kinds, whether on film, from public theatres and halls or from its own studios. In all of these ways television can open a million windows upon the world, whose excitement is often muffled by complexity, and whose routine makes us take for granted its infinite, interlocked and fascinating detail.

Whether its power to transmit images of events as they actually happen gives television a special quality is strictly a matter for social and psychological evaluation, and more will be said of this later. In the broadest sense, we must remember that television, unlike theatre or cinema, requires of its audience an essentially passive act. As a rule the show is seen in the home; and often it has an intimate quality suiting this "passive" audience. The act of viewing lacks the *participation mystique* of which much has been made in analyses of the cinema.

Whatever type of programme is transmitted, there is a basic grammar of television, belonging to all subjects; in the same way films, whether educational, documentary or feature, have their grammar. We have the right to demand that the grammar of television, which ensures ease of viewing, should be respected. But what are the special resources of television as a medium, in U.N.E.S.C.O.'s phrase, of mass communication?

Peculiar to television alone is the type of audience—the group of family and friends, with its unconstrained atmosphere; and the passivity (in the psychologists' sense) of the act of viewing, which at once makes television profoundly different from film. But above all, television possesses what the B.B.C. staff term "actuality". It shows the picture of things as they happen. The usual crude illustration is the Cup Final, where to the viewer the result is in doubt until the last. There is no doubt that television's topical influence in this sort of field is tremendous and exciting; but we are concerned here with the matter on another level. We need to know whether this factor affects the type, technique and style of performance.

“Actuality” dominates any direct television programme; it influences, but does not over-rule, all the artifices which are shared with film. But in the case of a play or a feature, it has important results which are far more serious than the usual claims—for after all we shall soon tire of wondering whether the star is going to sneeze or the professor fall into a coma before the cameras.

There are two important features of “actuality”: the first is the satisfaction which most people seem to obtain from knowing that they are seeing the performance itself, not a record. This does not affect the question of suspense, and should not be confused with the excitement of seeing a sporting event unfold; for of course the suspense of a play or feature is an affair of dramatic construction. Nevertheless, in an undefinable way, it tickles the palate to know that viewing and acting are simultaneous. Unfortunately, not enough work has been done by samplers or psychologists for us to know whether this reaction is general. Alexandra Palace seems to believe that it is.

But the major point is that “actuality” demands a continuous performance, as in the theatre. The film analyses every sequence into essential movements and shots, synthesising them afterwards; and much of its effect may depend on the skill of the synthesis, on the editing. Again, the whole quality of acting in the cinema is changed by the need to rehearse and play only a few lines or actions.

In television, however, the nature of the performance is quite different, because each of the players suffers from the tension and stimulus of taking part in a complete programme. At the moment the continuous performance is perhaps a liability to television, because it demands a flawless execution which only lengthy rehearsal can provide; but one has to write of what will soon be possible and normal. Another important feature of continuous performance is this: at the moment the players are stimulated by the knowledge, not only that the show must not stop, but that it is actually being seen by the audience. “Actuality” is a two-way affair. How will this factor be affected if television recording becomes widely used?

This brings us to a further and more difficult set of questions which in this space can only be roughly outlined. Let us assume that a television feature is transmitted in the usual way but through a closed circuit; as it is transmitted it is recorded for future use.

Clearly such a performance will have the special quality induced by unbroken action; but from the audience's point of view it will not have the “actuality” which is held to be a potent element of television. Will such a recorded programme be any less satisfying to the viewers? Will it throw away television's best advantage?

Here arises the problem of illusion. I suspect that it is easy to confuse *actuality* with *reality*. It is claimed that “film is synthetic, while television gives you the real thing”. In fact, television too is synthetic, but at an earlier stage. The moment you portray events through a camera, whose viewpoint and movement are determined by the producer, the quality of illusion is introduced. A complete sequence consists in an association of images seen one after the other from angles fixed by the producer; the

analysis, choice of camera positions, is done intellectually before the show begins, and this break-down is re-synthesised by the producer as he gives orders to his crew. So in the strict sense every television broadcast consists of a grand illusion. But radio shows us that the types of illusion can vary. What seems important is that the audience should know at the start what it is to expect—the immediate transmission of actual events, the recording and later transmission of actual events, or the selection and reconstruction of actual or typical events. Thus a television feature on the juvenile courts might transmit direct from the court, or use an edited recording of an actual court; it might equally well construct a studio version, and compress the dramatic essentials into a contrived, but none the less “real” train of events. As long as one knows what the type of programme is, one will not be disappointed, because one is used to the kind of illusion involved.

“Actuality” then, though an important factor in television, is not paramount, is not the only important feature. It would be dangerous to assume that, because television can broadcast images of things as they occur, it must always do so. This assumption could easily, by habit, restrict the scope of programme planning, and indeed restrict a particular programme itself, through a possible reluctance to use film sequences or even film throughout. There are bound to be times when film is neater and clearer than direct television, and when television recording makes possible shows which the public otherwise would never see.

Let us hope that no one at Alexandra Palace feels that whenever he uses film he is “letting down” television itself. The integrity of television consists in the constant efforts which go on to use and adapt the versatility of the medium, and the time has not yet arrived when fixed ethics can be written into a code of conduct for producers. It is clear enough that television, film and theatre are different media, which at points shade off into one another. Knowledge of the difference should not lead anyone to extremes.

I do not think that anyone will be led to dogmatic statements of this sort if a primary classification of types of programme available to television can be worked out. The immense possibilities for information and education open to the medium make it important not to confuse resources with essentials. If we can separate the varied functions of television, the different moods and approaches of which it is capable, there will be less danger that all programmes will be prejudiced by, for example, the “fireside” style, which when correctly used is of great effect. There is a place for the “objectively viewed” feature, where the characters never look and talk to the camera, as well as the more intimate “profile” type of programme, where the doctor, politician or artist makes viewers feel at home with himself and his work.

Although it is clearly the chief formative influence on style and programming, “actuality” needs to be examined before it is assumed that it is the permanent feature which must be stressed in every broadcast. The issue sounds simple; but I feel it to be fundamental, and in need of investigation.

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